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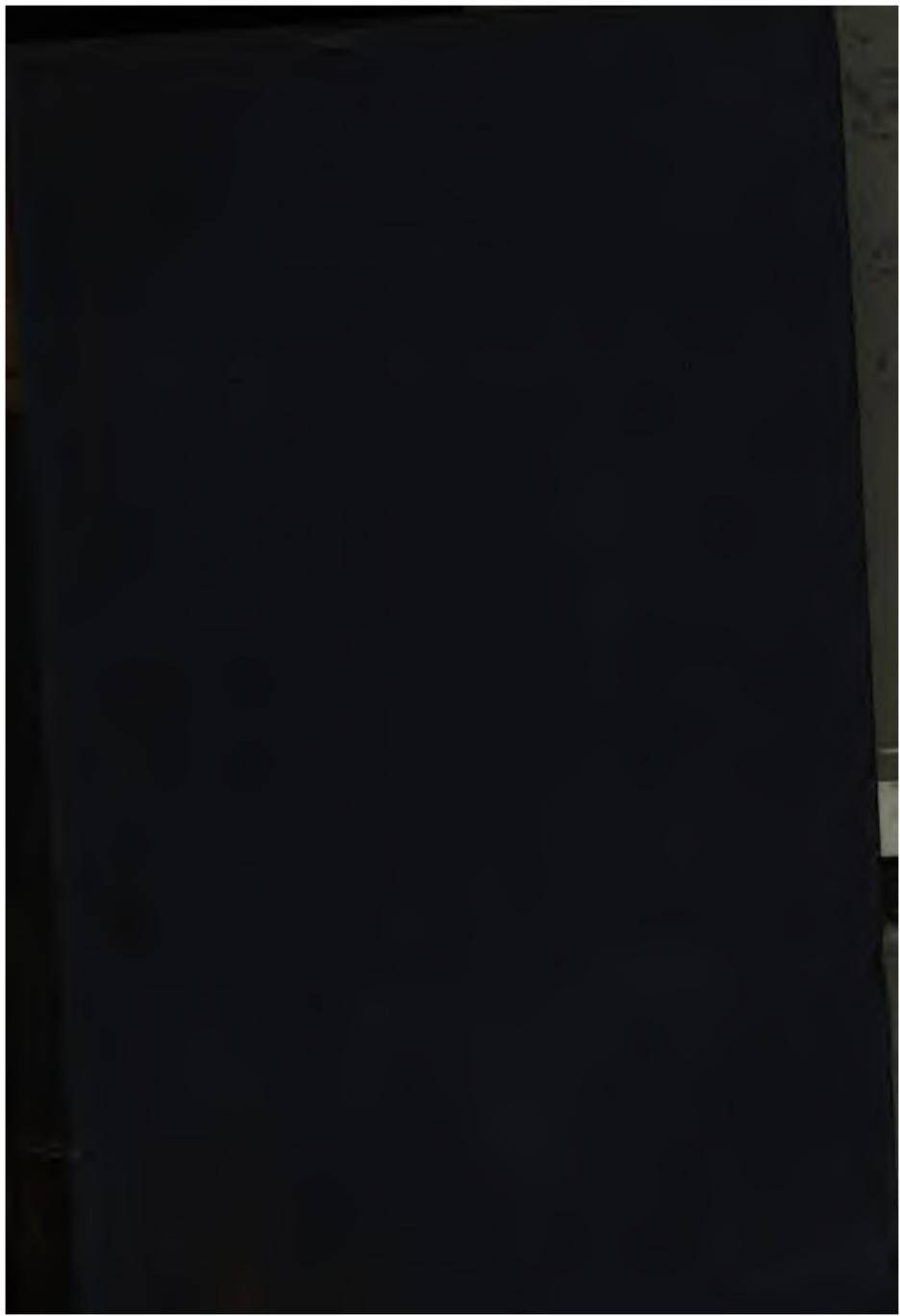
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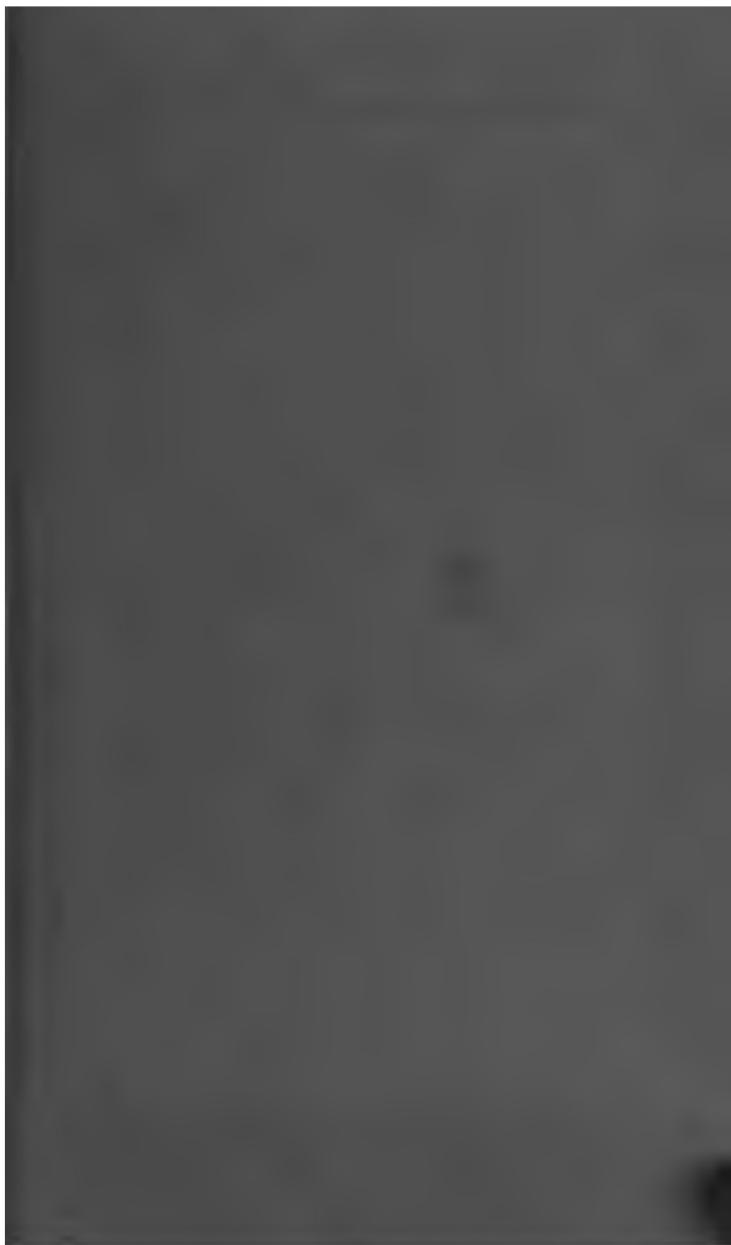
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PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

BY

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SERMON I.

FELIX.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

FElix, the Roman governor of Judæa, has a peculiarly bad character from historians: he was a man who never should have been promoted to high office, and only owed his elevation to the influence of his brother with a wicked despot. The situation of a ruler in those days, so uncontrolled as those governors were, was one full of temptation to any, even to men of integrity; and Felix was soon deeply stained with unlawful gains and encouragement of robbery and violence. Matters, however, prospered with him; and though he was not even free born, he had married, one after the other, three wives of royal descent. He



friends to see him, he should encourage hopes of his release, and suggest the desirableness of bribing the governor, in order to obtain the apostle's discharge. It was probably with this view that he deferred the accusers, commanded the centurion who had the charge of Paul to let him have liberty, and to forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. Nor did he stop here, but, for some reason or other, resolved to hear the apostle at length concerning this new religion. Perhaps he had an enquiring mind, liked to comprehend everything, and saw that, if he wanted to understand the interesting body which had so lately sprung into existence in Palestine, here was a good opportunity for learning the real tenets of the party, not by hearsay, at second-hand, but directly, from a remarkable man of education and talents, who was able to give an intelligible account of the new movement. Perhaps his wife Drusilla, (if one should be called his *wife*, whom he had induced to desert her true husband and to live with him,) being of the Herod family, and professedly of the Jewish religion, had an hereditary and instinctive interest in the fortunes of that faith

which her family had so often tried to crush. Whether for these reasons, or solely with a view of extorting money, Felix and Drusilla send for Paul out of his prison, which was too disagreeable a place for persons like them to think of visiting, and invite him to furnish explanations concerning the faith in Christ. No doubt they desired only an intelligible statement of opinions, and had not the slightest notion of inviting any personal appeal, which would reflect on their own conduct, and set their conscience at work as to their own condition. St. Paul *might* have treated the matter in the way they desired, alas! many of us ministers would have done so, and, flattered with the attention of the greatest man in the country, have proceeded to give what was desired—just a clear statement of the peculiar doctrines and practices of the Christians; have explained the origin of the body, impressed on the governor the distinction between them and the Jews, and there left the matter; with, perhaps, a petition for toleration, or a polite offer to attempt to meet any of the objections which might have occurred to the questioner. But it was not so that the great apostle acted;

he was concerned not for himself, but for the poor man's soul; (poor, indeed, was Felix, though the greatest man in the country;) giving him information was a secondary matter to saving his soul. Corrupt as the governor was, guilty as was she whom he called his wife, St. Paul did not despair of them, and intended to point out to them the way of salvation. But he knew that, before they would care to hear of a Saviour, they must be made to feel their sin. So he reasoned of just those matters which most directly applied to such a man as Felix: of justice, because the man was most unjust in his dealings with others; of temperance and self-control, because he had been foully lustful in his own private conduct. The apostle then dwelt on the judgment about to come, the day already appointed, and which he probably thought close at hand, when the Lord would return to judge every man according to his works, and when Pilate, and Felix, and Cæsar, and all the great men of the earth, would have to give account of themselves to God. He saw the awful danger Felix was in, and, what is more, he made him feel it. Great was the divine mercy in sending the

fervent apostle to this great sinner. Hardened as he was, the words of truth terrified him. It was the crisis of his life: an eternity was in the scales of the balance. It was possible for him to have surrendered his prejudices, renounced his objections, to have taken the apostle into his confidence, to have cried “What shall I do to be saved?” Something within told him that the words he heard were true, and the speaker no enemy of his: he could not scorn him, hate him, and say he would never have anything more to do with him; but, at the same time, he could not bear to be thus talked to, and in the presence of Drusilla, too! He was ashamed of having exhibited emotion, and feared lest his countenance had betrayed his terrors. Deny that he was guilty, he could not; change at once, he would not: so he took refuge in a miserable half-measure, which practically was a whole one. “Go thy way,” said he, “for this time: thou art not far off; I can send for thee at any time,—I have not leisure now; when I have leisure, when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.” Nothing could appear easier than to hear the apostle

another time. Was not his prison in Felix' own palace? could he not be always fetched? why be hurried away by an eloquent enthusiast, though what he said seemed true? Yet there were many clever people who were as eloquent, and no doubt could dispute it. Who ever heard of a governor turning Christian? why, it would be worse than turning Jew; *that* he could sometimes have conceived possible, for he was married to a Jewish princess, and the Jews had a nationality, and were of consideration in the world; but what was the sect which this enthusiast advocated? No one knew what to make of them,—what was their country, or where was their temple. Its founder had not yet been received into the Roman Pantheon; it was not yet a recognised religion, sanctioned by Roman law. It existed only on sufferance—winked at because not of sufficient importance to be persecuted; and was it this that Paul of Tarsus would talk a Procurator into? No; it was too ridiculous: and when Paul had been removed, he wondered at himself for having been so overcome, spoke gaily to Drusilla, praised the speaker's cleverness, but suppressed any mention of

having felt his words. Alas ! he knew not that a greater than Paul was there—that there had been striving with him more than man ; that the Spirit of God had been moving in the depths of his spirit ; that the God who made him was unwilling to see him perish, and had brought the very finest instrument that the earth at that day contained, and had applied it to his heart with affectionate force, as the most likely means that could be imagined to subdue it. “ Go thy way,” he said to Paul ; but he was sending away more than Paul. He pretended that he was only dismissing the subject *for a time*, but practically he was dismissing it for ever ; for though he could send for Paul again, and *did* send for him again, he could not himself ever feel as he did that first time. He could command Paul,—Paul was at his disposal ; but he could not command God’s Spirit. We do not read that he again trembled ; his emotions became less, though he sent for Paul often and communed with him. Doubtless he became better and better informed of what the peculiar Christian doctrines were : after a time, no heathen, perhaps, knew them better, for who of them

had such an instructor? But though Paul's preaching converted Sergius Paulus at one sitting, and had saved many souls who only heard him for half-an-hour, this Felix heard him frequently with less and less profit; all the time becoming, indeed, more and more intelligent, and more capable of giving a good account of what the Christian faith was, but farther and farther from himself believing it; never so near adopting it as that first day when he trembled: *that* was his convenient season, if he had known it; no other ever came to him half so convenient. He could never afterwards feel again as he did then. In his case there were peculiar obstacles to be broken through, before such as he could have changed; nothing but the strongest convictions could have extricated him from the coils of sin in which he had entangled himself, and he got farther and farther from being convinced: like a fortress, that you might perhaps have carried by a hasty assault before it had had time to throw up defences, but which becomes stronger and stronger every day you wait.

Now there are very many moral truths

illustrated, brethren, by the history of this man. See, first, that a bad life is an obstacle to belief; it goes to destroy the powers by which the soul believes. Who can doubt that Pilate, if he had not been a cruel, selfish governor, would have been converted by the unequalled opportunity which came in *his* way; or that, if this Felix had not been depraved by crime, his great prisoner would have become his liberator, and the apostle would have burst the bonds of Felix' soul first, and Felix would have struck the chains off the apostle's body afterwards. It was the previous ill-life of both Pilate and Felix that had eaten away the moral worth and manhood of their souls. It is hard for us to believe that which we wish not to be true; and, however gracious are the revelations of the Gospel, taken as a whole, they must, when faithfully presented, be clothed in terror, on their first approach to a man. Till he feels himself a sinner, nothing is done; till he feels that he has done what he could have helped doing, and has only himself to blame—that he is going away from God and heaven, and need stop, turn round, and go just in the opposite

direction ; till he feels all this, what hope is there of his giving the requisite attention, in this busy, engrossing world, where our own affairs so interest us, and our friends' affairs so interest us, and the affairs of all the world besides are reflected in the mirror of the day, and are brought before us to interest us ? Perhaps it is not much easier in a desert, for the heart carries a world of its own with it into solitude ; but certainly it is difficult in a city, in our day, to get the ear of men, to make them attend to divine things. But this difficulty increases in proportion to the pain which men have to encounter in facing the truth. The more a man has to confess, the more he has to abandon, the more he has to change, the greater difficulties has he built up to himself. O brethren, believe me, this is the secret of lurking scepticism ; it is not that the evidence which satisfies others need fail to satisfy you ; it is not that there is anything peculiar in the construction of your minds, but it is that you are unwilling to face the questions, "What you are? what you are becoming? what you will become?" It is because you secretly divine the work to be

great, that therefore you are afraid to set about it,—because change is painful, exposure painful, the ridicule of men formidable, therefore you do what Felix did—you defer: you deceive yourselves; you do not say outright that you will have nothing to do with religion, but you say, “Not now, go thy way for this time, I have no leisure now; when I have, I will send for thee.” Send for thee! yes, men think they can send for religion on a sick-bed. And suppose they *can* send, yet the power to believe may not be given them *then*. Faith is a gift, dear brethren, to be sought at the throne of God by penitence and prayer. There is a convenient season for every man; but, in all probability, it is now. To-day is not without its difficulties, but to-morrow will have still more; to-morrow will have to-day’s, and so many more of its own in addition. You feel, we will say, now, but it will be more difficult to make you feel to-morrow: impressions wear off,—it becomes more difficult to make impressions. We find the young more impressible than the old: the old have heard too many sermons, attended too many funerals, had too many ill-

nesses, escaped too many accidents; and, generally speaking, they feel decreasingly, less and less. We know that a thing looks more difficult the longer we defer it, whether it be writing a painful letter, making up a long account, closing a long quarrel: better set about it at once, and do it in the heat of the moment, than procrastinate. Whether it be really more difficult or not, it will *seem* more difficult the longer we put it off. What is wanted is strength of will to grapple with duty now; what is wanted is the grace of God to incline the heart now,—that grace which is never denied to earnest prayer. Till the decisive step is taken, till a change is made, the heart will be ever deceiving itself, first with one excuse, then with another. Its dislike to the truth will be ever making to itself disguises. This religious party is too bigoted, that too unsociable; this preacher exaggerates, that is inconsistent; the services at one church are too bare, at another too florid. O brethren, remember men may become better and better acquainted with the theory of Christianity, while more and more alienated from its grace. The more Felix

understood, the less he was attracted ; his character deteriorated, he became more and more callous, he thought more and more of the bribe which he hoped to get for releasing the apostle. Even his kindness did not last : with a clearer knowledge of the apostle's merits, he gets to treat him worse. He keeps him in suspense for two years, and then, to do the Jews a pleasure, and ward off an impeachment which he knew his misdeeds had well deserved, he leaves Paul bound ; and to leave a prisoner bound in those days was no slight punishment, considering what prison discipline was.

And, brethren, have we no parallel to all this among ourselves ? Do we not see those who resist conviction and procrastinate, gradually deteriorate ? Money, perhaps, becomes the only measure of things to them, and hardness of heart at last induces them to do that which they once thought they must become dogs to contemplate. Life, as it proceeds, has a deadening effect on men, unless Christianity introduce its regenerating powers. Leave the power of the Gospel out, and reverses sour men, ill-health makes them selfish,

experience of the world makes them suspicious, opposition irritates them, and so the ungodly old are less agreeable, amiable, and hopeful than the ungodly young. It is on this road to ruin that the Gospel meets men, saying, To-day if ye will hear His voice, now is the accepted time, now is the convenient season ; defer not till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day. My brother, what is that which should be done by you to-day ? Is it to commence a habit of private prayer ? is it to make a strenuous resolution to conquer a bad habit ? is it to procure a Bible, if you have not got one, and to read it ? (it is astonishing the number of persons who, even now, when Bibles are so cheap, have not got one;) is it to forgive some one you harbour a grudge against ? is it to pay your just debts ? God give you grace not to send away the messenger "for this time," as men call it, but which often amounts to sending him away for ever ; but may you have wisdom given you to know this as your convenient season, and to say, "What must I do?"

Finally, observe how the mercy of God found out Felix ; it was while engaged in the

duties of his profession. Few persons were less likely to come within the range of Christian influence than the heathen governor, surrounded by pomp, engrossed in business ; but yet in the ordinary course of that daily business the glad tidings are presented to him, and an opportunity given him of learning the truth such as scarcely another man enjoyed. God's mercy did not neglect even him, the sinner, the profligate ; and that mercy came to him through his professional duties. And so it is now, brethren ; the Almighty, in His providence, seems, so to say, to take care that none shall be excluded from His grace. It is offered to the most unlikely, it seeks out those that seek not it; it is presented, one way or another, to those who seem most remote from its influence, in order that all may be inexcusable, if seeing they see not, and hearing they do not attend. Still, as of old, it frequently is in the way of their professional duties that the message of the Gospel comes before men. They have to decide whether, in the conduct of their business, they will act on Christian principles. Christ, in one disguise or other, awaits their verdict ; He is the

touchstone of hearts. Those who are on the side of justice and temperance welcome Him; those whose deeds are evil hate the light. Therefore, brethren, hear Him, discern Him, not only in church, but in your professional employments. It is there that duty will meet you, and Christ try you. God enable us to cast in our lot with the suffering apostle, rather than with his prosperous judge, lest, in the judgment to come, we tremble when it shall be too late, when there shall be no convenient season, which now I repeat there is; for it is to-day, this blessed day, this day of grace. See that ye despise not Him that speaketh.

SERMON II.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.—THE DOUBLE ASPECT
OF THE CHRISTIAN.

2 COR. vi. 8—10.

“As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known;
as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as
sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

THE passage, with which the Church to-day incites us to follow St. Paul’s example, is selected from that one of his Epistles which is most full of matters personal to himself and bearing on his ministry: let us see how each portion of the text both described the Apostle of old, and also applies to private Christians at the present day. He was looked on as a “deceiver” both by Jew and Greek. The Jews regarded him as one practising magic, or as a renegade, who went about imposing on the ignorant common people of their own

nation, or attracted the heathen to a mock Judaism destructive of the law of Moses. The Greeks considered him as an adventurer, who held out novelties ; they looked on him as one who had either deceived himself or was a conscious impostor, and they pitied the ignorant multitudes whom he drew after him. Nor did the Apostle deny that he used guile as a fisher of men. He circumcised Titus, he shaved his head at Cenchrea, he kept a vow at Jerusalem, he made use of the altar of the "unknown God" at Athens, he claimed the privileges of a Roman, he set Pharisees against Sadducees in the council, he made use of popular feelings and turned to account current expectations. He did use all allowable caution, reserve, management, patience. He became all things to all men ; and yet he was no "deceiver." He never overstepped the nice line of truth, he never compromised a principle, never represented the Gospel as other than it is, never made a convert by appealing to a false principle, and never winked at a vice.

No wonder that he was taken for a "deceiver," for the influence that accompanied

him was quite unaccountable. Men felt that he was turning the world upside down—there was danger of whole countries forsaking the worship of their false gods; they saw persons under his guidance doing what, it seemed, only madness could prompt—sacrificing magical books of enormous value, selling estates, forsaking homes, encountering scorn, facing danger, unlearning philosophy,—and they said, Paul of Tarsus has bewitched them. And yet he was "*true*"; never once did he exaggerate the importance or overstate the urgency of his message. *They* were the madmen, the deluded, the fooled, not he; *he* saw realities, he had been in the third heaven, he had seen that Just One, his eyes were opened, and the show of the world no more deceived him. He had found *truth*; his heart told him it was truth—that it met all wants, reconciled contradictions, dissolved doubts, satisfied conflicting desires. He had received the truth, and had become himself true,—true to God and his own conscience, and so true to men. He would have been untrue, had he not (as the world called it) *deceived* men, that is, made them offers, promises, invitations, gained

an influence over them, and persuaded them. Because he *was* true he thus deceived them, if this was deception: a true friend, though he seemed an enemy; truly constructive and conservative, though he seemed destructive; a true Jew, though he seemed a renegade; the truest disciple of heathen philosophy, though he superseded it; truly a man of peace, though he made division: no wonder that the world could not understand, nor measure him.

“Unknown, and yet well known;” unknown in great Rome, when Onesiphorus sought him carefully; unknown at Jerusalem, when they sought to kill *him*, who was ready to be accursed for *them*; unknown in the ship, when the soldiers’ counsel was to kill *him* to whom they owed their lives; unknown at his loved Corinth, when they were become estranged from their father in the Gospel; unknown to the Gentile historians who record those days; not found in the lists of warriors, orators, statesmen, philosophers; unknown to the world: but well known in heaven, and the Church, the reflection of heaven; known to the Saviour, who loved him from

the womb ; known to the holy angels, whose joys he fed, as they tracked his course by the repenting sinners whom he converted ; well known to departed saints, who bent their eyes on the champion of the faith ; well known to tender consciences, sorrowing hearts, perplexed understandings ; to the friends he had gathered round him, the disciples he had trained, the Churches he had founded ; acknowledged instinctively by the conscience to which he appealed,—sure of a witness *there*, when he commended himself to it,—with the power of speaking directly to it, and sending his arrows right home. Wherever there was a conscience, there was sufficient to authenticate his mission. And “well known” *because* he had consented to be “unknown,” for he had had a choice : he might have been well known on earth ; but he chose to have his name cast out, and his place filled up, and his prospects blighted, that he might know Christ, or rather be known of Him.

“As dying, and, behold, we live ;” this is an expression common in the Apostle’s writings. “Why stand we in jeopardy every hour ?” “I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in

Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” “As it is written, For thy sake we are *killed all the day long*, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were *appointed to death*, for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men;” “in *deaths oft*;” “always bearing about in the body the *dying* of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are *alway delivered unto death* for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. We had *the sentence of death in ourselves*:” by these and the like expressions the Apostle seems to intimate more than that he was in *danger* of death daily, *ready* to die daily, the sport of a world that thirsted for his blood, and would not be satisfied with less; more, I say, for this readiness to undergo a bodily death was the outward acting of a continual inward mortification and crucifixion, the surrender of an old life, the withering of what had been as dear as life. Appetites were crossed, desires stifled, plans foregone, wishes checked, reasonings

silenced, by the taking up of a spiritual cross, by becoming a living sacrifice, by devoting a life.

"And, behold," he says, "we live;" calling attention to it as, in truth, wonderful, that life was preserved in the midst of death, yea, by means of death. It is the Christian paradox, "By dying, we live." A lower life perishes, that a higher may be developed; lower passions die, that higher and nobler may be unfolded. For the Christian is no Stoic, his work ends not with deadening passion, steeling and hardening himself; but out of this process are to arise quickened feelings, kindling love, and emotions springing with all the warmth and energy of life. "Behold, we live;" we are in a region of immortality, of perpetual youth, and continual renewal; everything about us has become immortal. We seemed to renounce, but, lo, we have regained; we seemed to lose, and, lo, we have found; we seemed to kill joy, and we have made it immortal; it is not only *although* we die, but *because* we die, we live.

"As chastened, and not killed;" "I shall

not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord : the Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death." He had, that is, a firm faith that there was a corrective discipline in what he was undergoing ; that all was ordered by love ; that God willed not his death. Chastisement he looked on as a token of sonship ; death he would accept from the world's hands, but not from God's : so felt he when the thorn in the flesh haunted him ; when, at his first defence, no man stood by him ; when Demas forsook him ; when troubled on every side, but not in a strait, not at a standstill, not at his wits' end, not wearied *out* ; perplexed, *but not in despair* ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed. The Lord, though He was long silent, at last answered, and in wrath remembered mercy.

" As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ;" sorrowing for sin—sin past and remaining ; grieving for the sins of others ; a man of sorrows, after the likeness of *the Man of sorrows* ; rivers of water running down his eyes, because men kept not God's law ; sowing in tears ; writing "out of much affliction and anguish of

heart with many tears ;” with an extended capacity for suffering ; bearing burdens ; thinking no brother’s sorrow strange to him : “ Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is offended, and I burn not ? ” And “ yet alway rejoicing,” not only in spite of this sorrow, but in consequence of it,—as it refined the heart, and was unselfish, and cemented inner sympathies, and had in it the promise of the annihilation of sorrow.

“ As poor, yet making many rich ;” so poor that we, with our modern feelings, should have been in danger of despising him ; without comforts, without means ; sometimes working with his hands, sometimes living on charity ; “ yet making many rich,”—so rich that worlds could not equal the treasures he bestowed, so that men would not exchange what he had put them in possession of for all the kingdoms of the world ; making their life rich,—rich in joys, comforts, hopes, friends, objects of interest,—making sickness rich, death rich ; giving them a secret which, like the philosopher’s stone, should turn all they touched into gold, which should discover to them materials out of which to construct happiness in what had long lain

by them unused ; “making them rich” not only for time, but for eternity ; teaching them to lay up treasures in heaven, to do works for which God would remember them for good, and, by means of unrighteous mammon, to make friends to receive them into everlasting habitations. And here, again, this power of enriching others was based upon that poverty : had he loved his own riches, he had been really poor,—inwardly poor, eternally poor ; but because he despised the riches of this world, he not only became rich himself, but was able also to make others rich.

Now “he had nothing, and yet possessed all things :” the world thought him to have *little*, but he declared he had *nothing* ; that little which he *seemed* to have, he counted himself as not having ; buying, as though he possessed not ; using this world, as not using it ; he had nothing of his own, nothing that he could depend upon, nothing that he did not resign, and hold on the slightest tenure. And yet he felt that “he possessed all things ;” that all were his ; all administered for his behoof ; all governed and swayed with a reference to him ; all in the hands of his Father ; all

passing through the hands of his dear Lord ; all to be enjoyed by himself, when the Son of God should appear as Heir of all things, and His saints should be co-heirs, and receive the whole possession of their inheritance,—when the wise shall inherit glory, and take the heathen for their inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for their possession. And already, by faith, he had appropriated this goodly heritage ; he saith not “*I shall possess,*” but “*I do possess :*” all things, he felt, were his,—the world, life, death, things present, things to come, all his ; because he Christ’s, and Christ God’s.

And now, brethren, if thus the Apostle described himself, if thus he warmed to the Corinthians, and strove to melt them, heaping on the fuel of love till his heart boiled over with burning words : “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged ; ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels ;” let us lay to heart his description of the Christian character, which, in its measure, should apply to us as well as to him, that we too may be inflamed with love to our Lord and to each other, by con-

sidering how glorious that character is which our common Lord assigns us.

Let us be content to appear to the world "deceivers;" nay, let us do something to provoke them to think us so: let us shew that anxiety to awaken, influence, educate others; let us allure them by such Gospel promises, pursue them with such blessed invitations, tell them of such rich rewards, infect them by such holy examples, allure them by the results of our experience, compel them to come in by such loving constraint, that we too may, as the world calls it, deceive many. So deceiving men, and "yet true;" continually ascertaining our own position, taking account of our own standing before God, very careful lest we profess more than we feel, lest our prayers be unreal, our vows excited, our devotion transient; jealous lest there should be aught of truth in the world's charges, and therefore taking care not to impose on others what we do not bind on ourselves, not to commend that which we have not first tried, that, in confidence of a good conscience, we may stand unmoved, truly rooted on to God by a living root of faith,

though all men round us be liars, and, because they are so, think us so. A good conscience will give us courage and confidence, and, if true to our own convictions, we shall be able to bear to be called deceivers.

So, again, let us bear to be “unknown” on earth, anxious only to be “well known” in heaven. Unknown, owing to our retiringness, modesty, quietness in doing our work, concealment of our alms, submission to undeserved censure, putting forward of others; owing to absence of vain-glory, of display, and ostentation: and “yet well known,” letting our light shine before men; well known to the poor, the ignorant, the doubting, the timorous, the afflicted; well known to our Father which seeth in secret; well known to the angels who tend Christ’s little ones; well known, though we scarce dare to think we are, to Him who has often been fed, and clothed, and visited, and relieved at unawares.

Again, let it be ours to die daily, that so we may more truly live,—that the body may be dead because of sin, and the spirit life because of righteousness; let us not be content till, in some real sense, it be true of us

that our life is a long dying, a continual mortifying of indolence, vanity, selfishness, ill-temper, unbelief, and self-will. Every day will the tempter say, "This is necessary to your life—you cannot do without this; life is not bearable on such hard terms;" but do you crush him, and say, "This is not life, but the enemy of life, the clinging parasite that must be removed, in order that the true life may be developed."

And as this discipline, exercised by ourselves, is not likely to be sufficient, but, in all probability, God will have to take our case into His own gracious hands, (hands firmer, safer than ours or man's,) may we be able also to make our own the Apostle's "chastened, but not killed." If chastisements were necessary for men living "in deaths oft," amid the fires of persecution, for apostles and great saints, how indispensable must they be for ordinary Christians in these days. St. Paul was buffeted and forsaken, Timothy had often infirmities, Epaphroditus was sick unto death, and shall we escape chastisement? Surely not: only let us not think it killing, let us not be killed by it; that is, not be crushed, not dis-

heartened, not rendered inactive and selfish ; not lose interest in others ; not remit from the work in ourselves ; not be so occupied by the sorrow as to forget the lesson conveyed by it.

“Sorrowful, indeed, yet alway rejoicing ;” not accounting any sorrow allowable which is not pregnant with joy, because sorrow for sin of itself presages holiness, and natural grief for the loss of friends is the pleading of love to the God who has given us affections, and to whom we appeal to satisfy them : and sadness and heaviness about the state of the Church and public affairs is an utterance of holy zeal, and a pledge that God will one day arise to judgment ; and men may weep as though they wept not, and rejoice evermore, even in a world like this. So shall the fountains of holy joy be unstopped in the heart, and the stones of selfishness being rolled away, the flocks shall be watered, the poor in spirit shall “make many rich,” the sorrowful shall be the best dispensers of joy, those that have suffered most shall be most tender, considerate, and delicate in relieving suffering ; they shall go out of themselves in

quest of sufferings like their own, out of their poverty they shall make others rich.

Brethren, it has been ever so ; those have been most successful in making others rich, who have felt themselves to be poor ; they have said, "We have not within our reach, or we do not allow ourselves, what the world thinks the only pleasures, but we can taste the noblest of all joys, we can enrich souls eternally, we can, under God, be the blessed instruments of endowing them with riches, not external to them, but part of themselves ; we can enrich them with grace, with habits, feeling, knowledge, courage, strength ; we can, under God, cause the heart once poor to become rich, for we can shew it objects to love, and give it the power of loving them ; we can shew it One that loves it, and teach it to open itself to receive the showers of His love."

And why do the poor best succeed in persuading men of this ? why are the self-denying, the weaned, subdued, controlled, disengaged spirits believed, when they tell of these things, whilst the earthly, the self-indulgent prate of them in vain ? why, but because the

poor in spirit shew in their own persons that they have believed the good tidings, that they have stripped themselves of all to obtain all, have sold all to buy the pearl, have counted the cost and parted with all to obtain the hid treasure ; and others, finding them well content with the exchange, are induced to follow their example, and to make trial of the blessedness of having nothing in order to possess all things, of setting loose to *all*, and actually parting with so much as there is opportunity of offering, that so they may have the recompence of the reward, and find greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; yea, may even now, by believing, enter into rest, even now affirm all to be theirs, and refuse to allow that any change could make things more truly theirs than they already are ; for they are ministering to their service, promoting their best interest, affording them the truest pleasure, whilst they are being held for them in the hands of their God, in possessing Whom as their portion they do, though they seem to have nothing, in fact “ possess all things.”

SERMON III.

LENT.—JUDAS ISCARIOT.

MARK xiv. 44, 45.

“ And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And as soon as He was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed Him.”

AS we draw near to the end of Lent, it becomes us more and more to meditate on our Lord’s sufferings. To-day let us reflect on the history and character of the traitor by whose agency those sufferings were brought about. It must strike all of us as mysterious, that our Lord should ever have chosen Judas Iscariot to be of the number of the twelve. He knew the hearts of all men; why then, it may be asked, did He select this false one? Now it may be that our Lord admitted him to be of the number of the apostles, because any common man would have admitted him.

I mean, that any one, being mere man, in our Lord's situation, and having to select the chief agents for his work, would have seen reason to include Judas. At the time of his nomination there was great promise of goodness in him; we, in our ignorance of the circumstances, cannot exactly say in what way, but it may have been that he had made great sacrifices to become a follower, had given up a gainful calling, had brought in others, had maintained the truth by argument; he may have been eloquent or powerful in the sacred Scriptures, or have had other gifts which fitted him to be a teacher of men. Seeing, then, that no human eye could have detected his unfitness, our Lord did not avail Himself of His *divine* foreknowledge to exclude him. We must remember, too, that *all* the apostles, at the time of their selection, were very imperfect Christians. Their faith in the Godhead of their Master was probably far from clear, their motives in following Him were not altogether pure. When they attached themselves to Him, they expected He would become an earthly king, and advance them to high places near Him. These elements of

character were in all of them : now only suppose that opposite processes took place in them and in him ; that their intercourse with their Master daily elevated them ; that daily they felt more the influence of His holiness ; came to regard His power less than His love, zeal for God, truth, and unselfishness ; that they gradually rose to a higher region ; began to catch something of His mind, to feel that dealing with sin was His province and theirs ; began to burn to deliver their nation from their ignorance and formalism, and to make known to them His holiness and goodness, which they had found do such good to themselves. Suppose all this, (which is, indeed, no supposition, but certainly true,) and then we shall see that, though they might not have renounced all expectations of their Master's earthly greatness, yet this would come to have a less and less prominent place in their thoughts : from living with Him, they became more and more like Him. Ordinary men somewhat affect those with whom they have much to do ; but ordinary men are imperfect and inconsistent, selfish and preoccupied. He, having no flaws of character, being per-

fect man, having unequalled sympathy, touching others not on one point only but on many, even in His human nature influenced men as none else ever did. Under this influence, what did not the eleven become? faults were gradually overcome; more and more clearly they reflected the Divine likeness. But now consider the opposite process, which was going on in the case of Judas. With him the worldly element gained daily more and more sway; he thought more of his Master's power of performing miracles, than of His goodness and holiness; whatever better feelings had once been stirred in him gradually cooled, the exercise of his own ministry proved harmful to him; he rejoiced too exclusively that the devils were subject to him in the name of his Master, and cared too little to secure that his own name should be written in heaven. Familiarity breeds contempt; the constant presence of holy things must have a deadening effect, if they are handled carelessly and irreverently, with a view to worldly interest. Perhaps Judas' talents were of a practical kind, and lay in the way of the management of business, and

it may be that this accounts for our finding him acting as the treasurer of the body, the one who bore the bag which held their common stock. Our Lord and His apostles had, it would seem, no means of subsistence but what was derived from the charity of others. Women of Galilee delighted to minister to Him of their substance, and the charge of whatever in this way came in fell to the lot of Judas. He had then before his eyes a recurring practical reminder as to how much their supply of worldly goods depended on the estimation in which their Lord was held. Were his Master accepted by the nation as Messiah, Judas would have the treasury of a kingdom in his hands ; were He rejected, Judas' office would be worse than nothing to him. If he once, then, began to measure things by their bearing on his own worldly interest, we can conceive him growing dissatisfied with the line which he saw our Lord more and more taking, making, as He did, no way in winning over the rulers and great men of the nation, but denouncing them unsparingly, raising up enemies on every side, coming more and more into open collision with

Herod in Galilee and the high-priests at Jerusalem. When the Jews had sought to stone Him, when every visit to Jerusalem was attended with peril to His life, when the rulers had gone so far as to give out that, if any one knew where He were, he should shew them, that they might take Him, it became pretty evident to Judas that the hopes he had entertained were destined to be disappointed, and that association with the Nazarene was more likely to conduct him to martyrdom than to worldly greatness. Keenly, no doubt, he felt this disappointment; till, from disliking our Lord's line of procedure, he grew to dislike *Him*, to look on himself as an injured, deluded man, hanging loosely on the movement, ready to be shaken off when anything should occur that might seem to justify his secession. Meantime, while this growing aversion was establishing itself in his mind, the watchful Saviour did not leave him without warnings —did not abandon him without appeals to his conscience, and efforts to save him. “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they

were that believed not, and who should betray Him^a." It is remarkable that this occurs in connexion with the revelation of the doctrine of the Eucharist. "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve^b." Of course, the more that first coldness and then aversion were allowed to establish themselves in the heart of Judas, the more was he likely to be offended at any display of opposite feeling on the part of others. Men do not easily bear to see *those* loved and honoured by whom they think themselves aggrieved. Judas' breast was ready to run over with discontent when he was provoked by the contrast to himself furnished by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, at the supper at Bethany. No sooner was the house filled with the odour of the ointment,—which expressed her lavish love, and told that she thought nothing too sumptuous to be spent in honour of Him whose death she felt was nigh at hand,—than Judas chose to term it waste, and

^a John vi. 64.

^b Ib. 70, 71.

asked, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred silver pieces, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” It seems, then, that by this time he had sunk so low as not only to hanker after worldly greatness, but to peculate and plunder that sacred store, contributed from the most holy feelings, and devoted to the highest purpose, viz. the sustenance of the Redeemer and His attendants. That bag he sought to fill, that he might help, not the poor, but himself, from out of it. He that, in daily intercourse with God Incarnate, in possession himself of miraculous powers, could hypocritically maintain such a position, and sully himself with such robbery, no wonder that he should fall yet more foully. Our Saviour’s rebuke, “Let her alone, why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good (noble) work on Me,” rankled in his bosom, and the devil, who had long been watching him, put it into his heart to betray his Master. “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will

deliver Him unto you? and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; and from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him." What will ye give me? how much to poison my happiness, to blast my name, to make life unendurable, to ruin my soul to eternity? Surely it should have been some great offer to outweigh these detriments! And yet it was only thirty pieces of silver. There was a time, then, when thirty pieces of silver seemed a large sum to him—when the contemplation of them shut out all other views. Alas! how vast may a trifle seem to us! there are few of us that have not known the time when a very trifling bait looked large in our eyes,—large enough to shut out all else. A moment's pleasure—a treat we had promised ourselves—a party we would go to—a dress we must wear—a point we had resolved to carry,—the mind may make of such as these an object big enough to shut out eternity; just as an object only the size of half-an-inch, close to the human eye, may shut out the great sun of the heavens. "What will ye give me?" yes, let us ask

this, and weigh well the answer, before we close with it. They covenanted with him for the thirty pieces, but, I suppose, did not pay them till our Lord was apprehended. Meanwhile the Saviour continued, in His mercy, to tolerate the presence of the false one, odious and distressing as it had become: *his* feet He washed, along with those of the others; taking care, however, to administer a warning, — “Ye are clean, but not all. For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean;” and again, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.”

By and by Jesus was troubled in spirit, and testified (spoke, i. e., in a more than usually solemn way,) and said, “Verily verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me.” It seems that, amid the real astonishment of the rest, Judas had the hardened impudence to feign astonishment, and the audacity to say, “Is it I?” “Thou hast

said," replied our Lord, (but not perhaps in a tone to be generally heard,) and at the same time handed him what was usually a mark of affection, the sop, i.e. a piece of the unleavened bread dipped in the sauce of bitter herbs. "And after the sop Satan entered into him,"—obtained now full possession of him,—filled his heart. "What thou doest do quickly," said our Lord, in a tone which no one else at the table understood; for so little did they suspect him, that each rather doubted of himself, and, up to that last moment, thought that Judas administered the fund with perfect honesty, and was going, while selling was yet allowed, to procure something required for the coming feast; or that he was to give something (as was the habit) to the poor, perhaps to enable some to procure a Passover lamb who were too poor to purchase one for themselves. "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night." Utterly darkened himself, he slunk out into the outer darkness, grasping the bag, while they within, relieved of his presence, continued to enjoy that unequalled communion, when the Son of Man opened

to His faithful ones the best treasures of His grace, and spake, and spake again, and answered doubts, and made revelations, and afforded promises, and lavished on them affection, and prayed as High-priest for them, and gave them His last command, and bequeathed them His legacy of peace. It was not night to them, as it was in the darkened soul of Judas,—God-forsaken, devil-possessed. But those whom Satan obtains power over must do *all* his work ; there is no depth of baseness to which they can refuse to descend. In the garden of his Lord's retirement, the garden of His agony, must Judas stand side by side with those who knew far less than himself what they were doing. He must give the Roman officer the concerted signal ; nothing will serve but that with a kiss he must indicate the person of his Master ; nay, he will say Hail, and call Him Master, in the act. Verily Satan had no pity for the creature he had made his tool. Scarcely was the sin completed, and the money paid, than the crime looked revolting. It is in the nature of sin to seem disgusting as soon as it is completed. When he saw the Saviour condemned, remorse

seized him : " I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood ; " the sight of the money is odious to him ; he is only anxious to get rid of it ; but he finds no sympathy in man : " What is that to us ? " cry his tempters, " see thou to that," cry they to him in the agony of his soul ; and to God, to Christ, to his Master, with whom there was even yet forgiveness, to Him he did not apply ; that night, which witnessed Peter's repentance, saw only his remorse. Still it was night with him ; for him no cock crew, no day-star arose in his heart ; he went out, not to weep bitterly, but to throw up his life, and fling it back into his Maker's hand. The son of perdition went to his own place. Good had it been for that man, had he never been born.

O brethren, destroy not the force of this warning by saying to yourselves, This is the intensity of vulgar wickedness, the wickedness of the thief, the hypocrite, the traitor, and the murderer : it is true Judas was all this, but, remember, he was also an apostle, chosen by our Lord Himself. There must be some very important lessons for us to learn

here, else never would such a singular combination have been allowed to present itself to us. I have hinted, as we went on, at several lessons: one is, that while we start in life side by side with others possessed of faults and subject to temptations like ourselves, all will depend on which of two processes is taking place in our souls; whether the better or the worse elements are being fostered and developed: we may be helped to rise to higher and better things, or we may come under the power of all the baser influences. And still it is the presence of the Saviour, it is contact with holy things—church and Sundays, and Bibles, and Sacraments, and sermons—that has this double effect. These harden some; these soften others. The sun hardens clay; it softens wax. It is the same sun that has these opposite effects.

Coldness will, in our case also, grow into aversion.

Every occupation has its dangers, as the profession and employment of Judas had its own. In each it is possible to grow blind to the spiritual aspect of things, and to regard solely the material; to get to care little

for our Master's cause, and much for our own supposed interest.

Great sins still are not produced full-grown ; they acquire their monstrous shape by degrees ; they are generated from cold, unloving hearts, through *little* departures from truth and honesty.

O brethren, see that you neglect not any such cautions, warnings, expostulations, reproofs, as those which the watchful Saviour applied to Judas, and by which He would fain have opened his eyes to his danger.

Think not for a moment that you can fix beforehand how far you will travel on the road with Satan : he that once admits of a bargain with him knows not what villainy he may have to carry out.

Presume not on the certainty of repentance : it is true, sin will look disgusting when completed, but it may be you shall only be able to regard it with remorse, not with repentance. Many since Judas have so regarded it, and have destroyed themselves, as he did.

Pray for the clergy,—it is greatly for their sakes that this history was written : their

employment exposes them to Judas' temptations.

Lastly, it answers Satan's end, in every bad movement, to procure *some one* of position and character to do the work of Judas, even with a kiss: pray that neither you, nor any you love, be such an one.

SERMON IV.

PALM-SUNDAY.—CAIAPHAS.

JOHN xi. 51.

“And this spake he not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied.”

THE raising of Lazarus was the immediate cause of our Lord’s death: many of the eye-witnesses of that miracle went straight to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then did the chief priests and Pharisees call together the Sanhedrim, in which the feeling generally expressed was, “What are we all about? our measures are too indecisive: this Man is making way, He is doing many miracles; this letting Him alone, which some have recommended, will not answer; so far from wearing *out*, the impression He makes will increase—the whole people will follow Him, they will adopt Him as their leader,

and burst out into a premature rebellion, which, opposed as it will be by the armies now in Judæa, cannot but be unsuccessful, and will provoke the severest measures of retaliation from the exasperated Romans, who will proceed to destroy the temple and root out our nation.” These were the avowed sentiments of the generality of the Sanhedrim, decently expressed, as befitted a grave assembly, but prompted by a far bitterer hostility to the person and doctrines of our Lord, than they allowed themselves to express in the deliberations of a body of which Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were still members. For the opposite powers of the new Teacher and of the dominant Jewish spirit were now in presence of each other, and it had for some time been becoming more and more plain that one of these must crush the other. With all His humility, meekness, and gentleness, our Lord *did* speak with authority, and did not refer His commission to any earthly source; He denounced the corruptions of the leading schools among the Jews, He spoke as a Law-giver of equal authority with Moses, He created in beholders and listeners a mys-

terious sense of inexplicable greatness ; He was obeyed, as one to whom His followers were devoted with implicit obedience, and He had made it thoroughly understood that, in the kingdom which He announced, and in which none but Himself was spoken of as King—in His coming kingdom, there was no place for interested motives, for ambition, worldliness, covetousness, self-indulgence, self-righteousness, ostentation : He had declared that the humble publican, the repentant harlot, were not excluded ; that the rule of His kingdom was, that whoso most *humbled* himself was most truly *highest* ; that readiness to carry the cross was a requisite for discipleship ; that only spiritual worship was acceptable ; that no earthly differences justified the absence of painstaking love ; that the removal of sin, and the production of holiness, were the great ends of His mission, not the satisfaction of national longings for political independence. Now they thought to themselves, if such a Teacher attained supreme power, what was to become of the Pharisee, the Sadducee, the high-priest ? And the power which would be taken from them

was not an insignificant one: the rulers of Jerusalem were not only the heads of that one city and the surrounding country, but of the great Jewish interest, which beat with so lively a pulse throughout the *whole* world; which boasted itself not only in the numbers, the wealth, the intensity of the attachment of its adherents, but in the assured favour of Almighty God; and felt confident that it was one day to take the ends of the earth for its possession. Should such an interest as this tamely quail before a simple, obscure enthusiast? with powers, indeed, but, it might be, magical ones? Such were the less avowed thoughts of the Jewish leaders; but underneath *these*, concealed even from themselves, were still more fearful motives: the presence of Christ was the presence of God; God in His holiness, purity, severe love, truth, and righteousness; and being in themselves unjust, untrue, covetous, impure, they could not but first shrink from, and then hate, Incarnate God. They knew not why, but they feared Him; they felt that He did not prophesy good of them, but evil; they felt Him a restraint, a weight, a torment, a terror;

they would have been more comfortable if they had never heard of Him—they should be once again comfortable, could He be, in some way, got rid of. Many, perhaps, had not, in their thoughts, ventured farther than this—to wish that He had never crossed their path, or might any way be removed; but while *they* hesitated, and did not know whither their own desires were leading them, they were ready to be influenced by a man of stronger character and more decided views, who presently addressed them, and spoke with more weight from his filling the highest office in the nation, that of high-priest. *He* was not for *half-measures*, but derided those who had so long trusted to them: “Ye know nothing at all,” said he unto them; “ye are but fools, and ignorant of state-craft: no need to discuss the Man’s character, or weigh nicely the justice of the case, or reconcile the difficulties that perplex you, and which arise from His being unlike any other man, and not being to be classed with any who before have drawn after them a party; this is all beside the question—it is all soon said, and in a short compass; mark my words, and I will come to

the point : it is *expedient* for us, whether right or not, that He be taken off; either *He* must fall, or the whole nation ; better *one* be sacrificed than many.”

The boldness of Caiaphas, in thus uttering what so many had secretly desired, but what they had not dared, to utter, the weight which his very sacred character as high-priest lent to his words, decided the majority of the council, and they passed at once a vote against our Lord, and “gave a commandment, that if any man knew where He were, he should shew it, that they might take Him. From that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death.” Now this speech of Caiaphas seems quite to be accounted for, as the politic utterance of a bold, bad man of no principle, who saw what was for his interest, and stuck at no means to compass it: but we are informed in holy Scripture that there was more than nature in it,—“he spake this not of himself,” i.e. not altogether, not solely, of his own mere motion ; but, though his own bad meaning was all that he was himself aware of, yet God was using him because he was high-priest, and ordered that his words

should contain another meaning ; he unawares *prophesied*; foretold not only that Christ should die, but die as a substitute—one for many, one for all; as a vicarious sacrifice—not for that nation only, but for all nations; in order that children might be gathered to God, not from Jews only, but from out of the Gentiles also; children of God, who, estranged from their proper parent, were miserable as outcast prodigal sons, till they knew that they might return, on the strength of the sacrifice offered by One to take away the sins of the world. In *this* way the words of Caiaphas were made good as he could have had no notion of their ever being fulfilled; in *another* way his counsel was signally defeated: he thought by his bold expedient to have prevented the Romans from taking away the Jews' place and nation, and yet this dreaded catastrophe was that which his counsel was the very means of accomplishing; for in consequence of the sin which he was the means of bringing about, God was provoked to let loose the Romans as His avengers, till they left of Jerusalem not one stone upon another. How awful that he should be

punished for preferring expediency to justice, by dragging to destruction the country with which his own greatness was bound up ! How still more awful that he should utter, unawares, the world-saving, all-precious truth, and should have no share in it, should not even *understand* it, should so misunderstand it in stating it, as to purpose by it to slay Him Whose most gracious love to man it announced. And this from a high-priest, one whose calling it was to deliver the oracle of God, and declare the mind of the Most High ! How awful that, while God would not allow him to escape from his functions, but decreed that, because he was the priest, whether he understood it or not, he should utter the mind of God concerning the Messiah, the King of the nation, whom it was his duty, as priest, to discern, anoint, proclaim, and do homage to ;—how awful, I say, that while God so regarded him, he should regard himself only as a crafty politician, and should resort to means of which a mere man of honour would have been ashamed. Verily he knew not what it was to be “high-priest that year ;” how little had he thought, when he intrigued, bribed,

circumvented for the post, which was at that day bestowed by the Romans, what the filling that post would involve : he had thought only of whether the advantages the situation would afford would be worth the *price* he should pay for it, only of the honour and patronage it would bestow, of how *long* he should be able to hold it, and, as men say, what it would be *worth* to him. Alas ! he knew not what, indeed, it would be worth to him ; how it would have profited him never to have been *born*, rather than to have been high-priest "*that year*," and so come to give that hellish advice on this council-day, and afterwards, on that night, to examine Jesus as He was brought from the house of Annas to the hall of Caiaphas. It is probable that he got this high-priesthood, that has for ever blasted his *name*, and, we fear, damned his immortal *soul*, by craft and bribery ; but, however he had obtained it, high-priest he *was*, and God, we may think, was not indisposed to have recognized him in his office, since He caused him to prophesy. And oh, had he understood the designs of God, and fallen in with them, what a career was open to him, in

virtue of his being high-priest "*that year!*" Had he, on attaining his office, been touched with the responsibilities of it, as some men have been, who, having climbed to power by unholy means, have become changed men when once in office, how different had been his own lot, and that, perhaps, *of the whole Jewish people* at this day. Had he used the influence which as high-priest he possessed, not *against* the Christ, but *for* Him,—had a sense of his own imperfections, his own impurity, limited knowledge and sympathy, imperfect separation from sinners, led him to desire such an High-priest "as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,"—had not worldliness and self-interest blinded him, so that he could not discern the adorable excellencies and truly priestly qualities of the Christ, how joyfully would he have owned Him as the true Priest, and rendered back into His hands the office which the sons of Aaron had so long had in trust, till the First-born, the Priest after the order of Melchisedech, should come; and having, as representing the old covenant, laid his commission as an Aaronic priest at the feet of

the Christ, how would he have received, in return, a place as a chief minister of the Messiah in the new order, which began at the day of Pentecost. Who, when the Holy Ghost descended, so sure to have been endowed with the royal gifts of the succeeding ministry, as he who should have meekly stepped down from his high position under the Law, in order that he might become one of Christ's little ones? What might not have been the influence, on the whole nation, of such an example? And now, alas! instead of thus intelligently, consentingly speaking for God, he is made the *ignorant, unwilling* organ of the oracle; like Pilate, who says, "Behold the Man,"—"I find in Him no fault at all," and calls Him "the King of the Jews," and all the time knows not he is uttering mysteries; like Ahab's prophets, who say, "Go up and prosper," and know not how God is using them.

And now, brethren, let us not only analyse the character of Caiaphas, but let us turn to ourselves.

The powers of Christ and of the world are still in presence of each other, like two hosts

drawn forth in battle-array, and we must take a side. It becomes more and more evident that the spirit of the world is enmity to *His* spirit, that one must crush the other; the world may disguise it for a time, but it is plain enough she will not have This Man to reign over her. Something, it is still felt, must be done, and at once: while weaker men stand hesitating, keener-sighted men, of stronger characters, see this and say, "Ye know nothing at all,—He or we must fall;" call a council, then, but let not the question be, "What do we?" i.e. *against* Him; "how are we making head against Him?" entertain the prior question, what is truth and right? ask not, what is for your *interest*? what is *expedient*? but, what is eternally just? Be not deterred by a multitude, as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea too much were; remember not what the bad great men of this world seem for the time, but what they are discovered to be at *last*. How great and dazzling seemed Caiaphas and his supporters in their high stations at that day, what respect did they not command *then*, though now they are cast out as abominable! Beware of fight-

ing against God, lest your prudent counsels be turned into imbecile folly.

Sift your motives in seeking an office, and the higher and more sacred any office is, the more carefully watch yourself: you may find yourself in it at a time much more critical than you thought; that place of authority, as master or mistress of a household, as a magistrate, leader, teacher, guide of others, which you sought ambitiously, may present you with difficulties, and involve you in arduous results, which you never contemplated. Beware of abusing an office; though *you* should forget its responsibilities, *God* will not; you may be made to exercise it, like Balaam, against your will; or, like Caiaphas, without your knowledge. If you will not benefit men by alluring them with your example, you may be made to do so by becoming a beacon to *warn* them. God uses even the wicked for His own ends.

Resign your office to Christ, that you may receive it back from Him; pray Him that you may understand the words you yourself utter, that you may benefit by the truths you are made the instrument of proclaiming;

consider the terribleness of being blinded to their meaning ; take care lest you neglect any divine suggestions, lest you daily understand less and less of them, and gradually fall out of the counsels of God, and see not the meaning of the very works which He is transacting before your eyes, perhaps by your means. O brethren, who should not tremble when he thinks of this awful blindness,—the blindness of Pharaoh, of Judas, of Caiaphas ; of men who, keen enough in their worldly interest, and thinking they see farther than others, say to their fellows, “ Ye know nothing at all,” and yet shew that they understand not the truths in their own mouths. Let us ask ourselves whether we always understand the truths we state to others : fathers who teach children, and lay down their duties ; teachers who instruct pupils, friends who counsel friends ;—it is well to utter truth, but it is awful not to avail ourselves of it.

SERMON V.

PALM-SUNDAY.—BARABBAS.

LUKE xxiii. 17—19.

“ Of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas : who, for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.”

IT is difficult for us to imagine the intense excitement which the recurrence of the feast of the Passover produced every year in Jerusalem. In our country, owing to our divisions, religious festivals are not of such universal interest; yet Christmas, though not kept by men of all persuasions, makes a considerable stir. We know what an interest attaches to Easter in countries of the Roman Catholic or Greek communion,—still greater attached to the Passover at Jerusalem; for, by the Jewish law, it could only be kept at one place. Conceive what a celebration that

would be which should oblige every male throughout our land to resort to one sacred spot: and in our Lord's time, Jerusalem was more than the religious centre of one land—it was the magnet which drew to one point the hearts of the exiled Jews who sojourned, for one purpose or another, in Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, &c., but still sang on, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," and, while they prayed continually with their windows open towards its temple, resorted to the great feasts as often as their necessities allowed them.

What a time of joy was it for the pilgrims who, on these happy occasions, were able to revisit, with offerings, the land of their fathers, the dwelling-place of their God! What joy for the children, when the time came (twelve years of age, it is said,) for them to be considered "sons of the precept," and to be allowed to accompany their parents on these sacred expeditions! A child's heart is ready for any excursion, and this combined so much—travel, and novelty, and religion, and a visit to the metropolis. So interesting were these occasions, that we have in

the Book of Psalms a series termed “Songs of Degrees,” which are said to have been especially written for them.

But, full of gladness as these times were to most, there were some unhappy beings to whom the season of general joy announced only bitterest woe. It was the custom for the Roman governor of Judæa to order the execution of criminals to take place, not indeed on the day of the feast, but just before it. Perhaps it was thought that the earth would not be less glad for being rid of wretches that disgraced it; perhaps, as the infliction of capital punishment was a point reserved for the governor himself, it was found convenient to dispose of these cases when the business of the feast obliged him to be at Jerusalem; for that sacred city was not the ordinary residence of Pilate,—it was too intensely Jewish, too fanatical, as the Romans expressed it, to be an agreeable residence for a heathen; and therefore Cæsarea, so called after Cæsar, a new city, situated on the sea that connected the Roman army of occupation with *their* metropolis, Rome,—a city which afforded all the magnificence and

luxury which the conquerors could require,—was the usual abode of the governors. It was only the unpleasant duty of watching affairs, observing the pulse of the people, and suppressing tumults, that obliged Pilate to move his quarters, at the feast-times, to the uneasy and hostile city which Jews loved and Romans detested. Being there, he dealt with the criminals whose cases awaited his decision ; and on the occasion of his being in Jerusalem this particular year of which we are now thinking, it seems he condemned to death, and ordered for execution, three persons. Of two we do not know the names ; but the third, and, up to that time, the best known, was one named Barabbas. There hardly ever was a time or country when insurrections and disturbances were more common than then in Judæa. Gamaliel, you remember, alludes to such disturbers of society^a ; so does the Roman commander when interrogating St. Paul^b. Pilate had slain, while they were sacrificing, some such who came from Galilee. The whole country was uneasy, and on the verge of rebellion ; and bodies of desperadoes and

^a Acts v.

^b Acts xxi.

banditti were not uncommon. This Barabbas was of note in this way, particularly at Jerusalem, which had been the scene of his violence: in his late outbreak he had committed murder, and probably no respectable person had any objection to the law taking its course upon him and his two companions, as they were supposed to be all equally hardened. The law taking its course meant, in their case, that they should first be scourged, then be laden with a beam of wood, part of the cross on which they were to suffer; then be paraded, amidst the contempt of the populace, through the streets of the living, outside the walls, to the ghastly spot where such exhibitions, then horribly common, struck terror into the Jewish mind. For the punishment adopted by the Romans for these cases, was one to which nothing would have induced them to subject any of their own nation, but was fit enough, they thought, for pirates, and slaves, and Jewish rebels, and malefactors, while it was singularly offensive to the Jews:—"Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree." It was no pleasant reflection for Barabbas and his two com-

panions, in the filthy dungeon which the prison discipline of those days assigned them, that Jerusalem was about to be dissolved in religious enthusiasm and national fervour, as soon as they that polluted the earth should have relieved men of their presence. They knew, indeed, that others had lingered for days on the cross, growing gradually weaker from loss of blood, and hunger, and exhaustion under the noon-day heat, supported only by the miserable hope that some friend (if a friend such outcasts had left) might venture by night to brave the Roman sentinels, and bring relief, or take them down. But this hope Barabbas knew was not for him, for this was Friday, the day before the Passover, and by *that* night, if no other, the Jewish rulers would insist on having every sign of sorrow obliterated, and getting the miserable criminals put out of their pain, that their bodies might be huddled away to the hideous burying-ground allotted for the criminals, who were, in those days, executed in fearful numbers. To encounter the gaze of the populace, and all the time find himself in the close gripe of the Roman soldiery; to suffer for hours on

the accursed cross, to be at last insultingly pushed out of life because he could not manage to die in time ; to be tossed from a dead-cart to rot among malefactors, instead of being borne to his fathers' quiet grave among the chants of the family ;—this, I say, stared Barabbas in the face, and seemed certain to be *his* lot, as it actually was the lot of his less guilty companions. By and by his companions were fetched out, and, as he prepared to accompany them, he was told, and could hardly believe his ears, that his name was not in the list. At first he thought they were mocking him, for if one were more obnoxious than the others, certainly it was he. But no, he heard it again,—“Thou art to go indeed, but not to execution ; thou mayst betake thyself to thy home ; it is not he, nor he, that is pardoned, it is thou ;—is not thy name Barabbas ? We do not understand your barbarous names, but as far as we can read it, it is Barabbas that the governor has sent word to release. Thou hast had a narrow escape : whom thou art to thank for it we do not know ; the gods have helped thee,” said the Romans ; while some, perhaps, thought it an argument that there

were no gods at all, that the worst criminal of the three should thus escape:—"Did it not prove that chance, instead of God, ruled over the affairs of men?" And whom indeed had he to thank, that he could walk forth from that dungeon a liberated man, and stretch his iron-worn limbs, and breathe the sweet, fresh air again, and keep, like a decent Jew, that Passover, the very name of which he had dreaded, as it seemed to bring his death nearer and nearer on? Whom had he to thank? His relations and old comrades among the rabble may have exerted themselves to bring his name forward,—this he could understand when he began to enquire to what he owed his life; but he could never have expected that high-priests and grave men in authority would have used their influence to set such as he at large again; but this, and nothing less, was what he found they had done. "Whence," he cried, "this sudden love for me? they moved not a little finger for me before: I did not know I had such friends; how is it I have become so popular?" Brethren, I wonder whether Barabbas ever knew to whom he owed it. How pleased *One* was to

occupy his cross : the mother that bare him did not rejoice for his escape as did his Substitute. Die the devoted One must, but it was a token, an instalment of His reward, that by His death another should escape ; one, for the time, representing the human race—a rebel and a murderer. Probably, if Barabbas came to know aught of his holy Substitute, of His prayer for His murderers, His patience, fortitude, gentleness, of the attestations which nature bare to Him, of the effect on the bystanders, no one felt more than he did the astounding contrast. “What ! *I* preferred to *Him!*” None knew so well as Barabbas himself the sins he had been stained with, the warnings of conscience which he had stifled, the remonstrances of friends which he had disregarded, the deterioration to which his character had been subjected, the number of persons whom he had induced to join him in crime ; and if he came to understand anything of the Galilean’s life and death, (and surely he must have taken an interest in the history of Him with whose fortunes his own had been so wonderfully bound up,) none would feel as he did the monstrous perverse-

ness of the preference exhibited. “What! *He* condemned, and *I* released! I, indeed, might have suffered justly; I should have received the due reward of my deeds, but *He*—!”

Now somewhat as Barabbas felt, should we, brethren, feel,—surprised at our escape: we, too, have done enough to condemn us; we had reason to expect the execution of sentence upon us, when *He*, the most Holy, the most Innocent, took our place, bore our sins, and endured our punishment. It is the wonder of ages—the guilty escaping, the innocent suffering in their place. We see it boldly, strongly exhibited in the case of Barabbas; it is, in all essentials, just *as* true of each one here present. Let each one say to himself, “Thou art the man.” *He* died for us before we knew our Benefactor, just as *He* died for Barabbas before that rescued sinner could know that his Substitute was not an unwilling criminal, but a most ready, voluntary victim, well pleased with the exchange, more willing to die than Barabbas to escape. Barabbas lived to *keep* the Passover, Christ *made* it. *He* was the Paschal Lamb; *His* was the blood, sprinkled on the door-posts in

Egypt, which protected the Israelites ; His is the blood which must be sprinkled on us, to protect us : He was the Priest, and He the sacrifice ; His Sacrament the means by which that sacrifice, once made, is ever pleaded, and the merits of that death conveyed to us who were not there present in body, but were as much contemplated, as much comprehended in the benefit, as any others that ever were born. Glory be to Him, that He shrank from no degradation, and submitted to have even a Barabbas preferred to Him ; yes, to Him, in whose ears the hosannas were yet ringing, who had moved along upon palm-branches, and been borne with acclamations on the beasts of the exulting disciples.

O brethren, what a contrast between the honours of His triumphal entrance, and this rejection in comparison with Barabbas ! Happy those who, after His example and by His strength, are neither elated when the world is with them, nor daunted when all goes against them.

But it is time that we should shortly remember the other actors in this affair of Barabbas,—the priests, the people, Pilate.

The feeling of the rulers was, “Any one but Christ;” even Barabbas rather than Him. They had no interest in saving a coarse, rude murderer, who damaged the cause of national independence, by associating it with robbery and murder; but they were determined to carry their point, which was the death of Jesus; and to compass that, they will even turn advocates of Barabbas:—“Any one, so that it be not this Jesus; He whom we dread, whose holiness we have an aversion to, who wages war with our sins, who insists on our becoming little children, who tells us we must repent and believe, and begin again from the beginning. We are too old to learn, too great to confess our error; we have gone too far to turn back.” And so they insisted on working out their scheme, Caiaphas pulling the strings of the whole machinery that was set in motion; bribing Judas, suborning witnesses, rending his clothes with affected horror, getting up such a charge as Pilate would recognise, and at last stooping to suggest Barabbas, and give the people his name as a cry. O brethren, all this to carry a point,—justifying it to himself because it was *expedient!*

"We are committed," he said, "and we must not be over-nice;" and he hoped that the name of Barabbas would never be mentioned again. Beware what you make your point in life ; resolve that you will not be unscrupulous ; better fail, than succeed to your own disgrace and destruction ; beware of the argument from expediency. Remember, if you love not Christ, it will end in your case also with your taking up at last with any one rather than Christ, any thing rather than the Gospel ;—not this man, but, rather than Him, even Barabbas.

And then the people, the poor foolish, misguided people, demoralized by their governors, or, what is next to it, left unreformed by their governors ! the greater part knew not wherefore they had come together, or why they shouted "Barabbas," and "Away with *Him*." Poor mob ! are such as these thine idols ? is such as He thy abhorrence ? "Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas." Yes, like chooses like : *they* were then in revolt, *they* were then murderers ; what wonder that they take their fellow's part ? Alas ! for the intimidated few who knew better ; Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, and the Galileans whom He had

fed, and those whom He had healed, and those whom He had taught, and those whose consciences bare witness of Him—in that hour, where were they? and why were not their voices heard? It is too often thus; the best sit tamely still, abide in their own houses, shut themselves up at home, when wrong is being done in the streets; they let a populace decide matters in which better men should have had their voice. We are all too much afraid of the cry of the day, whether heard in the streets or uttered by the press; and the richer, the older, the more respectable, refined, and comfortable any are, the more are they wont to be nervously afraid of coming into collision with the power of the many. Yet who so great a public benefactor as he who stands between an erring people and their victim, and appeals from the intoxicated to the sober public? O brethren, pray for *His* courage, calmness, presence of mind, care for others, sacrifice of self, who was the only one calm and self-possessed on that dizzying day. Pray that you may not follow a multitude to do evil, but may be valiant for the truth to the death.

And lastly, the miserable Pilate,—what thought he of Barabbas? None knew better than he the real state of the case,—the management of Caiaphas, and the delusion of the people. But he had no fixed principles as to what was truth, no anxiety to find it, no belief that it existed so as to be found; and therefore, though he did not fancy doing wrong to oblige others in a matter where he had no interest of his own at stake, yet he acts more from fear of his prisoner, and regard for his wife, than for justice' sake; and he satisfies himself that he has done enough, and he will wash his hands before them, to establish his non-participation; and he only yields, he thinks, to necessity: the mob is growing,—there is no saying how excited it will become; and he hears that threat, that a complaint will be laid before the jealous emperor,—and now his own interest *is* at stake; *that* alters the matter, and he releases unto them him that, for sedition and murder, was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

“From all blindness of heart, good Lord,
deliver us.”

SERMON VI.

PALM-SUNDAY.—THE CROWN OF THORNS.
OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS AS KING.

ST. JOHN xix. 2.

“And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on
His head.”

WHEN Pilate's weak attempts to save our Lord had been ineffectual, and it was resolved that the innocent should be sacrificed to the will of the people, He was, as a necessary preliminary to the execution of His sentence, according to the custom of the Roman law, first scourged with rods, and then given up to the insults of the soldiers, who were assembled together for that purpose. On this occasion “They gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers; they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him,

and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they spit upon Him, and took the reed and smote Him on the head.”

We happen to have preserved to us in history an account of similar indignities, soon after this time offered, at Alexandria, to a nephew of Herod Antipas, an unpopular person, whose elevation to a kingdom excited the anger of the populace. They took a poor distracted creature who used to wander about the town, brought him to their public assembly, set him on a lofty seat, put on his head a paper crown, covered his body with a mat for a regal robe, and for a sceptre put a piece of reed into his hand ; by this mock show conveying their contempt for Herod, the would-be king.

So a modern writer describes a pretender to the crown in Persia, as having a mock crown put on his head, armlets on his arm, a sword by his side, being mounted on an ass with his face towards the tail, and paraded through the camp amidst cries of “This is he who wanted to be the king.” By and by it was ordered, that whoever chose might spit in his face.

So in English history, we read of one who failed in winning a kingdom being beheaded, when taken prisoner, and his head, surmounted with a paper crown, being set on the city gates.

In all these cases, bitter enemies felt a satisfaction in thus expressing their contempt of their foes' claims to a crown, and with the Roman soldiers this feeling was the stronger, as, in insulting our Lord, they vented their feelings of hatred to the whole nation of the Jews, whose representative they considered Him to be. They could not be ignorant how impatiently the Jews bore the yoke of Cæsar; what an intense national feeling was among them, leading them to assert their independence, and disposing them to welcome any leader who should arise. And though the Jews chose to repudiate this particular claimant, and were themselves forward in giving Him up, the Romans generally, from Pilate to the meanest soldier, were determined, by means of Him, to gratify themselves with a triumph over Jewish nationality. For this reason Pilate wrote the title, King of the Jews, and refused to recall it; and from the same cause, the

soldiers keenly relished the savage pleasure of decking our Lord out with the insignia of mock royalty. As Romans, they were more or less concerned in maintaining the monarchy of Cæsar, in virtue of which they felt themselves the lords of the human race; and the more their dominion irritated the Jews, the more pride and pleasure had they in asserting it. What more natural than that the representatives, for the time, of the *world's* kingdom, should insult the Representative of the opposite, or God's kingdom? Had Egyptians or Greeks persecuted our Lord, it would not have been *so* significant as His being condemned by *Romans*, the natural rivals of His kingdom.

Doubtless, too, at the very time that the soldiers mocked Him, they felt that there was something kingly about Him: He seemed not altogether abject and contemptible, but formidable enough to provoke opposition, and justify their jealousy. Not only were there rumours current of His extraordinary powers and miracles, such as had reached Pilate's wife and King Herod, not only must the unaccountable violence of His own nation against

Him have led the soldiers to speculate as to His character, but surely even they, brutal and insensible as they were, must have noticed enough in His behaviour to see that they had no ordinary man to deal with. They could see something kingly in His dignity, self-control, and undisturbed serenity; He had not quailed before the Governor; nay, they could hardly help knowing that Pilate had tried to save Him: but fallen greatness touched not their coarse natures, and with vulgar insolence, they had a base pleasure in insulting Him, almost fearing Him while they smote Him; but as He endured and remained passive, gaining courage and repeating the blow, as men do while cruelty grows upon them.

How different was all this conduct from that which is observed in Christian countries towards the worst criminals after *their* condemnation. With what reserve and consideration are they treated; allowed all possible alleviations, and shielded from all unnecessary pain, while with sorrow the sentence of the law is reluctantly put in force against them. Truly, as Christianity has abolished such bar-

barous punishments as crucifixion, so has it discouraged all such inhuman examinations as our Lord was on His trial subjected to, and all such unmanly insults as were then commonly wreaked on the condemned. Even in these respects, *His* suffering has been the cause of others *not* suffering like things. There was something which made each one of the injuries and insults offered to Him peculiarly painful: let us see what it was that rendered this of the crown of thorns eminently bitter. It was not the mere *physical* suffering, as the sharp spikes were driven by the blows of the soldiery into those sacred temples, which had so lately sweat blood; it was not merely the distress which any one would experience in being made the butt of an unfeeling rabble; but that which chiefly, we must think, grieved His soul, was the denial of the truth of His Kingship, of that royalty which He had assumed, and always exercised, for the good of man. We know that, in proportion to any one's exalted station, does he feel a reverse; in the degree of his good intentions does he suffer, when misconstrued; we know an injury, an insult from one who

belongs to us, is far bitterer than from a stranger. And this was the King of kings; this was He whose heart had yearned to do His people good, as never king's or ruler's heart had yearned before. These were His subjects, heathens though they were; they were His creatures, dependent on His will for life, and He grieved *for* them while He suffered *from* them.

For what was that Kingship which they so lightly profaned? nothing less than the subject of divine decrees from eternity. That royalty which was meant for man at his creation, when God constituted him ruler over this lower world, had been long forfeited by sin; but at last, after four thousand years of abeyance and attainture, it had been restored to man, again conferred on him, retrieved by One who had it in the amplest plenitude, and held it, not for Himself alone, but had taken it up with the purpose of conferring it on men in general. His Kingship had been sung by angels, owned by beasts, acknowledged by the elements; had been exercised on Satan, had availed to recover men out of the dominion of hostile powers, had chased diseases, spread

a feast in the wilderness, had been shewn in all the domains of thought. It had lately been put forth more prominently by Himself; He had accepted the homage of the children, had made a royal entrance into the capital city, had taken possession of the temple. Of this royalty He had made no use to surround *Himself* with comforts, or shield Himself from evils, but had used it purely for others; being first in dangers, lowest in offices of love. And the question on which the world was now pronouncing was, “Would they have such an one to reign over them? was this their ideal? was this the ruler they desired for their spirits? one who should help them against sin and Satan; should give them power over lust, over themselves—power to bear, to suffer, to labour?” This question had been submitted to the Jews, and they had answered “No;” that they desired one who should lead them to battle against their earthly enemies; a king of power, not of holiness; great in inflicting, not in enduring, pain. They wanted not a king of all men, but one who should be exclusively the king of their nation, the embodiment of their prejudices. And now

the Romans were returning as unfavourable an answer : they cared not for a kingdom, unless it was of this world ; they desired not a power which came from above, and accounted for itself to One above. A kingdom of truth was incredible to them ; they wanted not a kingdom for all men, for the slave as well as for the master, but only such a kingdom as should preserve them in undisputed supremacy over the heads of others. For them too, therefore, had He “no comeliness, no beauty that they should desire Him.” Consequently, the very Sovereign that weary humanity so greatly needed, the only one who could take up man’s cause and be the successful Champion of it, the world, when He appeared, rejected and insulted. The Jews blindfolded and buffeted, the Romans scourged, mocked, and smote Him.

It was not, indeed, altogether astonishing that such should be the lot of perfect goodness : the Psalms are full of descriptions of the sufferings of the righteous, produced by their very righteousness. Many eminent saints had been afflicted in a somewhat similar way : David had been vexed with rebellion, Moses

and Samuel with ingratitude. It had long been seen that any one who would serve men must prepare himself for suffering, must expect to be misunderstood and thwarted: heathen philosophers, it was said, had foretold what would be the lot of a perfect teacher, should he appear, viz. nothing less than such a death as crucifixion. Crowns had generally pressed heavily on the brows that bare them, offices had been found laborious, and great services had seldom met with great gratitude. But the crown of thorns! that was a refinement of cruelty; it expressed outwardly at what a price this Kingship had always stood Him: His brows were now first seen to bleed outwardly, but they had long bled inwardly. Every sin of His people had been as a thorn,—a thorn in a vital part; every transgression He had felt to touch His crown, for it was a denial of His Kingship, in the acknowledgement of which alone could men find peace, or He attain His end.

Others had sought, ambitiously, the crowns of this world, and thought to find them pleasant; He had accepted His crown with the full knowledge that it would be woven of

thorns. That burthen which every crown brings, He had not found, but sought. He had voluntarily accepted and glorified the common lot of rulers. While they had too often sought to escape from the burthens of their position, He had declined none of the pains of His. Surely, by this He would teach us to shrink from none of the labours and sorrows attached to our duties, to discharge every office to which we are called, as men used to say, painfully, painstakingly ; to expect that each office, if we discharge it well, will stand *us* in sorrow ; let us be aware that, the higher our position is, the more thorns will be found in our crown. This is why there were thorns surpassingly sharp in His crown, — because He was infinitely higher, called to a loftier office than any mere man could have borne. Do we not see it so now ? see that, the higher any one is, the more does his crown become thorny ? Kings and queens, surely their coronets are set with many thorns ; the loftier, purer, fuller any soul is, the more easily and deeply may it be wounded. But has He not, by meekly enduring the crown of thorns, ennobled suffering, and taught men

that their happiness is not to be found in declining the duties of their position, but in going through with them ; from love to others—in submission to the will of God—at whatever cost to themselves. This is the precious lesson of the “thorn-encompassed head ;”—profitable to all, especially profitable to all who are called to rule : a fit lesson for Palm-Sunday.

Again : observe, brethren, in this circumstance, one of the many incidents which, in the history of the Second Adam, remind us of the First. Adam fell in the garden and was cast forth into the wilderness, Christ combated in the wilderness and triumphed in the garden ; Adam fell through appetite, Christ denied appetite. The tree of the cross is the opposite to the first fatal tree. “The place of a skull” was, some said, the place of Adam’s skull, where the first father of mankind was buried. From Adam’s side Eve was formed, as he slept ; from Christ’s, by His sleep, i. e. His death, His bride, the better mother of all living. So now the thorns, with which Adam was cursed, constitute the crown of Him who is to take off the curse,

• John xix. 17.

by bearing it. Behold the man—behold Man—behold Man dishonoured; His sceptre, a reed; His crown, composed of thorns; it is all true, to the life, of man. Yet this dishonour, willingly borne, is thereby reversed. Every injury must be compensated, every insult be outpaid by glory. Because his claims now unjustly provoke the world's insults, therefore shall they be acknowledged before the universe. Where the pain is now the greatest, there shall the glory be the most resplendent. Every thorn shall be exchanged for a beam of light; the bleeding brows shall be radiant with effulgence; the thorns of earth shall be replaced by the many crowns of heaven. Is there not here, too, a promise for His people? May they not understand, that what befell Him, their Master, shall be repeated in them, the disciples—if only they *be* disciples?

It is according to the order of God's providence that, where the glory is hereafter to be the greatest, there now should be the seat of keenest pain. It is natural, then, that those who are hereafter to shine the brightest should here be the most afflicted; that the greatest saints should pass through the keenest sufferings. Every thorn, meekly borne,

hath in it the promise of a crown ; for He who is to dispense the rewards of the rege-nerate, is He whom the soldiers jeered. He is ready to grant us His own supports and His own reward : and so martyrdom hath been ever looked upon as *crowning*, and the first martyr's name, Stephen, (*Στέφανος, a crown,*) seemed a happy omen. Surely every thorn which God, my brethren, hath woven around you, needs little to transmute and glorify it. What can be in your crown that His was not woven of ? there was shame in His, and ingratitude, and the sense of un-kindness, and solitude, and desertion, and spiritual abandonment : the head that had so lately been honoured with the costly oil of love, was now bowed beneath the blows of hatred ; but where love, and faith, and resignation, and patience, and strength were, the cruel thorns could not disquiet, nor the multiplied blows discompose : as representing man He bore, for our benefit He overcame ; and *in us* He is ready again to sustain the pressure, that we with Him may enjoy the crown. The world's gay garlands, that seem so light, and from which they think they have extracted all thorns, shall become a clinging

circle of fire, which the wicked shall in vain endeavour to detach from their scorched and transfixed brows ; but the Christian's thorny burthen, if meekly borne, shall pass, like his Lord's, he knows not how, into a blessed crown of glory. "If we suffer, we shall reign with Him." He will give us "the incorruptible crown." "Henceforth," saith St. Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." There is a crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him,—a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

But beware, brethren, lest, instead of obtaining for yourselves a crown of glory, you plait, as it were, again thorns for His crown ; look on every sin as a deadly thorn, a grief to your Saviour, and shrink from again distressing Him, lest your lot be not with Him, but with them that wounded Him.

SERMON VII.

GOOD-FRIDAY.—“INRI.”

JOHN xix. 19—22.

“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.”

“IN leading to his death a person condemned to crucifixion, it was usual to carry before him, or put upon him, an inscription stating the crime for which he suffered; and sometimes such an inscription was fastened to his cross,”—as was done in our Lord’s case.

This, brethren, is one of the few incidents of the crucifixion which are recorded by all four of the Evangelists; it is one which we may therefore conclude to have been spe-

cially noteworthy—suitable, therefore, for our consideration on this great day, this *good* day, *the* Friday of the year. The letters “INRI” are not an uncommon ornament of our churches ; they have found a permanent place along with the cross, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the scourge, and the other symbols of His healthful and bitter passion.

“Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” The inscription of course referred to the charge under which Pilate was called upon to condemn our Lord. The Jews themselves had in their council declared Him to deserve death for claiming to be the Son of God, but they knew that this charge of blasphemy was one with which the Roman governor would not concern himself. He would say it was a question of words and names, and of their law ; that they must look to it, that he would be no judge of such matters : foreseeing this, when they proceeded to the governor’s castle the Jews entirely altered their ground, and called upon Pilate to execute their prisoner, as one who had stirred up the people throughout all Jewry, making Himself

a King, and so undermining the authority of Caesar.

There were many such in those days, wild and bloody men, who gathered followers round them, and became heads of banditti, by working on the irritated feelings with which the stubborn Jews regarded the Roman rule. But Pilate soon saw that the meek, patient sufferer who stood before him was not of this class, that His mind was set on something unearthly, that He was of a different stamp from His persecutors, and that it was from envy they had delivered Him up. Loth he was to condemn Him, and tried expedient after expedient to escape from the bloody work which he disliked: but he had no inward faith in truth and virtue to give steadiness to his principles; his own crimes had given the Jews a power over him which they knew how to apply; his mind caught at a miserable evasion—he deceived himself into thinking that it was a matter of necessity and state policy to condemn the accused; the *loud* voices requiring that He might be crucified prevailed over the still small voice, and he gives one more unjust sentence from the bench

where equity should have maintained its place undaunted. The voices of them and of the chief-priests prevailed ; Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required, (how little like a ruler;) he released unto them one that was really guilty of the crime which they professed to think so heinous—so did our Lord's enemies contradict themselves—him, viz. that for sedition was cast into prison, whom they had desired ; but he delivered Jesus to their will, their savage, blood-thirsty will ; delivered Him for them to have their will upon Him, and to torture Him as they pleased. It was a judicial murder, if ever there was one ; but doubtless the forms of the Roman law were observed, the decree was registered by clerks, the warrant officially made out, and a proper officer, with his regular number of private soldiers, appointed to see the sentence executed. “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews ;” Pilate wrote it, perhaps, with his own hand : “Take that,” said he, “and nail it up over His cross.” King of the Jews, perhaps, he said to himself as he wrote it : they threaten me with the Emperor, and to secure myself I will put it on record that I have been so

jealous for his prerogative as to crucify the Jewish King for him ; besides, thought he, this *is* the accusation, this is the only charge which I can recognise. Was it by a slip, through forgetfulness, that he did not express it so as to signify that the Nazarene only desired to be King, was a pretended King ? or did he mean to insult the Jews through our Lord, implying his contempt for a nation whose King was worthy of no better treatment than to be crucified ? He was doubtless so displeased with himself, so ill at ease, that, like a man angry with himself, he was inclined to be angry with others ; and he did not love the Jews a whit better for threatening him with Cæsar, and making him go against his own convictions and his wife's remonstrances. He was not pleased to have been forced to commit a crime in order that they might indulge their spite, and he perhaps took his dissatisfaction out, so to say, by writing a title for the cross which would annoy the Jews. “Though I state it to be their King whom I crucify, why should they complain ? they have only themselves to thank for the insult they have provoked : how do I

know that He has not some pretensions ? men talk of a former dynasty here before these upstart Herods. They call Him Son of David ; there looked something kingly about Him ; perhaps He was a dangerous Man ; maybe I have not done so ill for myself in suppressing Him ; at any rate, I will turn it to the best account I can,—it shall do me some service with Herod and with Cæsar.” It is probable that the high-priests, who had had a great struggle to compass our Lord’s condemnation at all, did not, in the moment of their exultation at carrying their main point, much regard the particular words in which Pilate phrased the legal *titulus* for the cross ; but the place of execution was public,—it seems to have been near some great thoroughfare which led into Jerusalem ; “the people stood beholding :” the inscription was so drawn up that it was within the comprehension of every one that could read writing ; there it stared men in the face, in the official Latin for the Romans ; in Greek, the universal language of the day, for all the various pilgrims that resorted to the feast ; and in the Syriac, for the common people of the neighbourhood, who knew only their

own vernacular ; and as the high-priests looked and looked, by and by it struck one and another that the inscription read rather awkwardly : it might be misunderstood ; they had rather Pilate had not written King of the Jews, though of course he could not mean it. He who had done so much to oblige them would surely not object to make a little alteration ; so they apply to him : “ Write not the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Let the words be introduced, but guarded in that way. Of course He was a Pretender ; no one can imagine Him to have been our King.” But they found Pilate, though he had been complying about a greater matter, tenacious about this much smaller one. Pilate answered, “ What I have written, I have written ; I do not choose to alter it : you must be content with that answer. It is done, and it shall not be undone. I have my own reasons, I have my own thoughts on the subject.” Brethren, it was more than Pilate wrote it there, it was no finger of man traced those words—the hand of God was in it. He determines that things shall be

called by their right names. Truth will out. They have crucified their King, they have chosen to have no other king but Cæsar, the representative of the world's kingdom: any one but Jesus they have said; rather Cæsar, whom we most hate, than Him. And this whom they had rejected was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Shiloh, their peace,—this was their father Abraham's seed,—this was the branch out of the stem of Jesse, David's Son and Lord,—Messiah the Prince,—the Lord's Anointed, the breath of their nostrils, one among ten thousand, altogether lovely, fairer than the children of men,—Jesus, their true Joshua, Moses' Successor and Superior, the new Law-giver, the true Conqueror of Canaan, the Captain of the Lord's host, the Angel of the covenant, Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the age to come, the Prince of Peace. Like a king hung at his own palace-gates, by the attendants that have ate his bread,—like a David, hunted by his own unnatural son, the Man of Sorrows felt it an additional stab to be termed at such an hour their King. It grieved Him that men, not fiends, should do

it—that Jews, not heathens: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” — the words came back upon Him,—“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” But not only was it God’s truth that He was their King, but what is most remarkable is, that He was then proving Himself their King, doing the most kingly of all acts. A king should be superior to all his subjects, the first among them in every power and noble quality. In a rude state of society, men will choose as their chief one bigger, braver, stronger than the rest; and in any state of society we are disappointed when an incompetent or undignified or disreputable person is in a high position, and our feelings of propriety are satisfied when the ruler of men is worthy of his place, and above men not only in station, but in largeness of mind, grandeur of soul, breadth of view, and all that we feel ought to distinguish leader of mankind. And what so kingly is to suffer for His people? It was spoken to a ruler when Moses said, “Blot me out of the book that Thou hast written;” it saved him a king when David stayed the angel of the plague with the words, “These

sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand be on me." But these were only words, though noble words—they could not be more than words with them; for no mere *man* may redeem his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him. They were attempts and approaches, feeble efforts of the kingly character to shew itself—such as we see among the heathen in the tale of Codrus, the Athenian king, who, learning that whichever leader of two opposing armies first died in war should bequeath victory to his people, got himself slain, that, through his death, his people might triumph. Such as these were the shadows, and now had come the substance which had projected them. The King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, had freely, voluntarily given Himself to be crucified. He could have smitten His apprehenders, so that they had never risen from the ground on which their own evil conscience and His majestic calmness prostrated them; He could have passed through the hands of the Roman soldiers when the whole band was summoned to taunt Him; twelve legions of angels were waiting His beck. That would have been

an exercise of power indeed, but not of the sort of power which it pleased the God-man to shew. He came to shew power over Himself, power to bow a human will to the divine, the power of self-sacrifice and patience. This was the King He would be ; His kingdom not of this world, not like the kingdoms of this world. His power should be seen, not in inflicting, but in bearing pain—pain of every conceivable sort—bodily torture, mental anguish, wounded feelings, the presence of suffering friends, of taunting enemies, of triumphing fiends,—the weight of sin, the grief of a holy soul denied the light of God’s countenance. It was by enduring this He proved Himself King of men, first and foremost in all that was most truly glorious, in noble, god-like manhood. He would win His crown ; He would make good His right to His title. The kingdoms and dynasties of this world generally trace up to some great one, some man the foremost of his age, great in capacity, strong in will, victorious over others ; and the new kingdom, the kingdom of God, the kingdom not of this world, it should date back to a great One ;

but His greatness should be in suffering and humiliation, in love and faith. And this makes Him the King whom man wants, man who is born to trouble ; this makes Him the King whom the poor can understand. Glory to Him that He manifested His pre-eminence in a way that appeals to the hearts, and is level to the understandings, of all. Had He displayed His perfections by intellectual eminence, His very greatness would have made it impossible for the multitude to appreciate Him : it needs intellect even to take account of surpassing intellect. But this is One, ye weary and heavy laden—this is One ye can have confidence in, and resort to. You cannot be pierced with a pang which He has not known—which He did not expose Himself to, in order that He might deprive it of the worst of its sharpness ere it reaches you. We can now only be wounded through His body ; the sword that touches us has first passed through Him, and has acquired healing virtues by the contact.

Such then, brethren, were some of the precious truths witnessed for by that inscription on the cross, “ INRI :” behold how God

overrules men's bad passions to proclaim His truth! Pilate and high-priests may wrangle, but the result is that they only draw more attention to that which God writes through their agency. The world resists His kingship, but spite of itself proclaims it: behold it written in the world's three great languages, to shew that He is King, not of the Jews only, but of all mankind. It is remarkable how everything that took place that day was significant,—every insult but endears Him to us, not an outrage but turns into glory; act as they will, His enemies stultify themselves, and serve Heaven's high ends. “Behold the man,” says Pilate; and we discern in the meek Sufferer whom he produces, a representation of afflicted humanity: it is Man whom he exhibits in The Man. They lade Him with His cross, and we spring forward to bear it after Him; they cry “His blood be on us and our children,” and it remains so—a curse on those who will have it so, a blessing on those who have it sprinkled on them in another way; they pierce His side, and open to us two sacraments; they gamble for His coat, and we learn a lesson of unity; they lift Him

up, and all men are drawn to Him ; they fix Him between two thieves, and He converts one on the spot, and thousands by means of that one. Truly this is the Son of God, He who even in the hour of His weakness accomplishes so much. O brethren, it should be our delight to compensate to Him for those sufferings, to turn each insult into an honour. If they bowed the knee in insult, we should do it in homage ; if they cried " Prophesy to us, thou Christ," in scorn, we should do so in earnest ; if they gave Him drink in mockery, we may refresh Him in a better way ; if they treated His Kingship with contumely, we may humbly adore it ; if they pierced His side, we may wash in the stream that issues from it. And specially I would say with reference to that which we have been considering to-day—His Kingship, let us promote His kingdom over the heathen, over Jew, Turk, Infidel, heretic, over those in our own land that neglect religion ; let us be zealous for the Headship of Christ over His Church, and confine Cæsar to the things of Cæsar.

Finally, let us remember that, if we would

partake of our Lord's triumph, if we would reign with Him, we must suffer after His example. We must die to the world, we must be crucified to it in some real sense ; we must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts : no cross, no crown. O brethren, this inscription over His head is a very practical subject for all of us. When they had crucified Him, then they proclaimed Him King ; and so, when the cross is fairly ours, then shall we too be proclaimed kings. We are to achieve greatness, not by bowing others to us, but ourselves to others ; our kingdom is to be won, not by the ways of the world, not by inflicting, but by suffering, by commanding, not others, but ourselves. The kingdoms of this world fail their owners ; men achieve greatness, but their very greatness proves their ruin,—it turns their head ; they will have everything after their own way, self must be their centre, and their recompense is that they find themselves isolated : but the kingdom not of this world proceeds by other laws, and is immutable, eternal. The likeness of the Prince of Martyrs is being ever repeated in His saints : by His strength, after

His example, multitudes have won, multitudes are winning, the crown of life. They take up the little crosses which God puts in their way,—it is early rising, or it comes in the form of attention to an exacting relative ; it is waiting when they want to work, or exertion when they would fain repose ; it is to sacrifice their Sunday to teach others, or to relinquish some pleasure to console them ;—and small as these things are, to be mentioned in connexion with the surpassing mysteries of this day's sacrifice, they are yet faint “tokens of the spear-pierced side and thorn-encompassed head ;” they go to prepare partners for His glory, saints that shall sit on the steps of His throne. “Be thou faithful unto death,” He saith to one and another, “and I will give thee a crown of life : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

“To Him the Name o'er every name
That's known in earth or heaven ;
To us the cross, with all its shame,
With all its grace, is given.”

SERMON VIII.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.—THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN x. 14.

“I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine.”

NO labouring employment in the fields seems, even now, so noble as the shepherd's; there is a leisure allowed in it which the ploughman knows not, and which may be used for meditation or study; and so, in some parts of our own country, the shepherds are a remarkably thoughtful and highly educated class. A certain dignity and responsibility is attached to the office. But in ancient times, among the Jews and other Eastern nations, there were other causes which still more exalted the employment. The shepherd had to be a man of courage, for he had to protect his charge against robbers and wild beasts. Often, too, in a primitive and simple state of

society, it was the owner himself who kept the sheep,—as Jacob, Jacob's sons, Moses, David,—and in Australia this is, I suppose, sometimes the case even now. The sheep were then their own, and therefore they had more interest in them than a hireling would have had. We shall not be surprised that this figure has been largely used in Scripture, to set forth the relations between men and their rulers, if we consider in how many points the shepherd and his sheep may furnish us with lessons. The dependence of sheep on their shepherd is complete; they are, indeed, naturally gregarious, but what would they be without human care? They receive everything from the provision the shepherd makes for them,—food, protection, and guidance; his care, in many countries, must be unceasing, by day and night. At some seasons, more than ordinary attention must be bestowed—e.g. at the lambing season. On particular members of the flock must be expended, at times, special care—e.g. on those who are in danger of being over-driven, on those with young, on the lambs of the flock, on those lately shorn, on those who have

wandered. Language testifies to the care of the shepherd in these cases. His relation is a singularly pleasant one, his charge is one which peculiarly wins on the heart: few animals are so harmless; he has little need to use force. Again, his duty leads him to a knowledge of his flock one by one: it is not uncommon, I believe, among us, for a shepherd to know the face of each of his sheep, though to a stranger they are indistinguishable; and in Sicily and the East the shepherds used to give each of their flock names, as we do to dogs. In many countries the shepherd goes before the sheep, and guides them to follow him by piping to them; they know his notes, and though many flocks are kept near each other, each will gather to the sound of their own particular shepherd. Every animal, we know, is capable of being elevated and cultivated by man's paying particular attention to it; qualities are drawn out in it which we never could have thought it possessed. This is true even of what we consider very mean animals, and is doubtless still more the case with sheep. There seems, therefore, nothing unnatural when we hear of a poor man getting to feel to one

almost as to a daughter. No wonder, then, (particularly as a large part of the Bible was written by shepherds, and men of like occupation, such as Moses, David, Amos, and great part of it, *for* a people of pastoral habits;) no wonder that this employment should have furnished occasion for conveying so many useful lessons. In the time of Jacob we find images borrowed from it: David uses it largely, especially in the sweet Psalm^a written probably in a time of prosperity; so, too, the prophet Ezekiel, who was more like a settled minister over a particular flock, than the rest of the prophets; so our Lord, so St. Paul, so St. Peter, in whose mouth the allusion is particularly touching, as it reminds us of our Lord's words to him, "Feed My sheep." It does not, however, seem that under the Old Testament, the priests and Levites discharged the pastoral office in anything like the same degree as Christian ministers do now; their duties were more to maintain the public service of God, and to administer government, than to be spiritual pastors. The Levitical priests did, indeed, present the free-will offer-

^a Psalm xxiii.

ings of individuals, and, what is characteristic enough of the old dispensation, (the main purpose of which was to bring out a sense of sin,) they did examine and pronounce on cases of leprosy, but they had few dealings with the consciences of men. So that among the Jews, the image of the shepherd was less often applied to priests than to kings and rulers ; to *feed* came to mean to *rule*. But the office of shepherd received a new development when the Lord Jesus came ; the pastoral character never came out complete but in the Christ. The Old Testament had spoken of *God* being the Shepherd of His people, and yet it seemed, in some respects, more natural that the office should be discharged by a *man* ; it was discharged, for the first and only time, fully and adequately, by Him who is God and man, who could know His sheep, for He is God, and be known by them, for He is man. Then came out the character of God, then could men understand His nature, by approaching it in Christ, by feeling the subdued glories of Godhead stream through the veil of the manhood of Christ : in Christ we see the heart, so to say, of God ; His

compassion, His philanthropy, His grief at sin, His anger at hypocrites, His patience, gentleness, consideration,—His watchfulness, His regard for individuals, His willingness to make sacrifices for them ; we find (what seemed before impossible) God suffering for us, laying down His life for us. All these mighty, wondrous truths, the image of the shepherd proved equal to embodying : what other likeness could exhibit so much ? The Lord Jesus, taking occasion, as it would seem, from the conduct of the Jewish rulers to the man born blind^b, whom these evil shepherds with monstrous perverseness cast out from the fold, because, forsooth, he was recovered, declares^c that they are not shepherds, but thieves and robbers, because they have not entered into the sheepfold by Him, the door. He describes, for the man's comfort, and for the comfort of all in the same case, that He is *the Shepherd* of the sheep ; that the true porter, the Holy Ghost, “openeth to Him ; and the sheep hear His voice : and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep,

^b St. John ix.

^c St. John x.

He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." He describes His coming, in contrast to the false teachers whose doctrines killed the soul, to be in order that men might have life; and not this only, but have it more abundantly. He describes the self-helpfulness, the security of His sheep, and the agreeable variety which shall be provided for them: "they shall go in and out, and find pasture." He describes the closeness and intimacy of mutual understanding between Him and His sheep as something peculiar, enabling His true disciples to distinguish His meaning under difficult circumstances, and to resist the blandishments of designing strangers, even if they should endeavour to imitate the true shepherd's note. He sets forth His love as extending even to the laying down of life, as being unbought, no hireling's affection, but the love of a proprietor for his own. He magnifies His love to us, in that the sacrifice is made by One so awfully great as to know the unapproachable Father, who yet lays down

His life for those who were originally no more of the same nature with Him, than sheep are of the same nature with their shepherd. "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." He speaks of the wondrous, world-embracing effects of His death: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." What other single passage of Scripture contains so many precious truths? His Godhead in these words: "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again;" His manhood in the same words. His vicarious sacrifice, and its consequences to the Church. To this He afterwards adds other mysteries: no man shall pluck His sheep out of His hand; the Father gave them Him, and no man is able to pluck them out of His Father's hand.

But our Lord not only *described* the pastoral office, His whole ministry for three years *exhibited* it, both towards the people generally, and towards His apostles and disciples more particularly: He taught them with authority,

but as they were able to bear; He used parables when they became useful, and drew His illustrations from what was going on before men's eyes; He applied different modes of healing, according as they were suited to each particular case; He made the bodily cure a stepping-stone to the spiritual; He faithfully reproved, He patiently bore, He unremittingly watched, He sedulously warned. Thus He strove to arouse and touch the heart of Judas, and forewarned Peter; He denied requests, that He might call out faith in strong hearts; He prayed for His flock as no other minister ever prayed. In all things He had the pre-eminence. He provided for their safety at His own cost, saying, "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way;" "none was lost of those given Him but the son of perdition." He bestowed individual attention, as on those He cured, on His apostles and the Magdalene.

Surely few images could set forth His great love as well as this of the shepherd. The office of a king, indeed, sets forth much of the work of Christ, and a king and shepherd have much in common; but there are some

defects in the functions and position of a king: *he* rules much by force and power; *he* is separated by his grandeur from his people; *he* cannot, among so many, know each one individually. But the shepherd is gentle; he is with his sheep; he calls them, one by one, by name. "I know my sheep," saith *he*; he knows them, (1.) as none can know who has not created: *this* induces special knowledge, as we find no one understands a thing so well as he who made it. Again, he knows (2.) as none can know who does not greatly love: we find *we* know those best whom we care to know, whom we love; we know their wants, feelings, wishes; we observe their tones and countenances. Again, he knows (3.) as none can know who has not had the experience of a man, and does not retain the body and soul of man; we find *we* can understand others in proportion as we have the same nature with them. (4.) Once more, he knows, as none can know who have not been concerned, as physician or pastor, with the special wants of individuals. How much more do we find our physician, or one who has looked into our particular circum-

stances, knows of us than a stranger does. Judge you from all these considerations what pre-eminence as a pastor He has who is God and man, who as God created us, as God and as man loved us; knows us and can sympathize with us by experience of our nature as man—and knows us as He who has taken upon Himself the conduct of our souls, the treatment of our case, the provision for our individual culture and happiness. If he knows us thus, should not we know Him? should we not meet each quality in Him with corresponding duties? Take the four points mentioned above. Should not we know Him as our Creator, to whom all is due, who looks for that from us for the sake of which He created us, viz. the tribute and return due from our whole being? Again, if He knows *us* by love, should not we know *Him* by love? Would not love make us quick in discerning Him under different forms—in His various dispensations, whether afflicting or comforting? Again, if He knows us by human sympathy, should not we count on that sympathy, and look to it as our only stay and comfort, wherever we are,—however

many we may have around us, or however *few*? Lastly, if He knows us by attention to our individual case, should not we submit to His treatment, follow His leadings, beseech His guidance, attend to His directions, listen for His voice? Should we not be content with the provisions He makes for us, and believe that He will give us as much of green pastures and waters of peace as is good for us? Every image used in holy Scripture is useful for bringing out its particular lesson; there is a nice discrimination observed in the use of each. The fisher, e. g., sets forth the missionary work of a minister; the shepherd, the attention of a settled minister to a particular fold. When our Lord exhibits Himself as the Shepherd, it is for us to learn dependence, submission, security, and confidence, the duty of personal knowledge of our Lord, and the happiness of keeping together, as one flock under one shepherd.

Brethren, do you feel your need of a shepherd? are you convinced that your whole inner man wants attention like that which a shepherd bestows on his sheep? do you feel you want *loving* attention; want to

be cared for, want to be looked after in religious matters; want unceasing attention, individual treatment, because your case is not exactly like that of any other being in the world? do you feel you want protection? You must learn to feel your needs, in all those respects; it is absolutely necessary that you should come to feel that it is not only your body, your present life, that needs care; (and what would that be, if not cared for by love, and watched narrowly by loving anxiety?) but that, in the concerns of your souls, there is much to be done; that you have peculiar wants, desires, faults; are susceptible of pleasures and pains for which this world has no measure. If an animal, a mean animal, be capable of being cultivated and elevated by human attention, are not you capable of being cultivated and elevated by attention which is at once human and divine; such attention as the Good Shepherd offers you, if you care to be of His sheep? Hath He not the pre-eminence? Is He not that Shepherd which every soul of man wants? Did He discontinue His pastoral office when He ascended into heaven? Did He bestow

individual care on Simon Peter and the Magdalene, and will He not bestow it on us? Surely He is still "the Great Shepherd of the sheep⁴," to whom, more than to an earthly minister, they should be pointed, even as, it is probable, St. Paul in these words points the Hebrew Christians to Christ, in order to comfort them, after the death of their especial pastor St. James. Is He not the Shepherd and Overseer of *souls*, as St. Peter terms Him? Surely the Lord Jesus is most ready to exercise this office: and how does He exercise it? He exercises it in answers to prayer, by the influence of His Spirit, in the teaching of His Word, by the grace of His sacraments; yes, surely, but not only by these, not only thus, directly, in the immediate access to His own person, which is certainly the privilege of His people; but also He, the Great Shepherd, acts through His under-shepherds, the ministers of His Church. They are admitted to a pastoral office, Christ's functions are administered through them; they are to rule the people—this is why the chief is called a bishop or

⁴ Heb. xiii. 20.

overseer, and another under him a rector; they have a cure of souls; they are to administer the food, which is the Word and Sacrament; they are to deal with individual consciences; and to be acquainted with the particular circumstances of the members of their flock; they should be expected to rebuke, encouraged to reprove, not repulsed as interfering; they should be invited to make themselves acquainted with particulars, not rejected as inquisitive; they should be helped and saved from becoming "idol shepherds," transacting a formal ceremonial, a sham superintendence; they should find their congregations like sheep, docile—find them answer to their voice, and keep together. Pray that you may have ministers worthy to continue Christ's own office, endeavour to be as sheep to Him,—to Him in Himself—to Him as He acts through others; know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake.

But the Lord deputes some of His office, as Shepherd, not to the clergy only, but to the laity also: kings, and all who share in

the government, are exercising part of His functions, and should rule by Him, under Him, and for Him. Nor kings only, but each Christian has in some **measure** a cure —each is curate for those in any way committed to him. To the parent the Saviour saith, “Feed My sheep. Lovest thou Me? Feed My lambs.” To each He says something like this: “Do all the good thou canst to all whom thou canst reach; *care* for them —*care* for their *souls*; love them, watch them, feed them, go before them into danger; know them, allow yourself to be known by them, lay down your life for them, gather together, do not scatter abroad, feed, but do not fleece, tend not as an hireling, but for love; go after that which is lost, and be gentle to it when you have found it.” Perhaps each has his particular line in which he can be useful to others—each has some sheep which he might tend,—which he will tend with success, if he keep them in the spirit of the Shepherd,—which God will multiply, if he tend them, from the first, diligently, though at the beginning they be few, dull, and shy.

The Lord make us know Him as our Shep-

herd, that we may lack nothing—know Him as we are known; the Lord endow us, in our several stations, with something of His own spirit, especially with that love which is the chief qualification in our case, as in that of apostles, for feeding His lambs and His sheep.

SERMON IX.

ON A SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.—THE RESURRECTION
OF THE BODY.

EZEKIEL xxxvii. 3.

“Son of man, can these bones live?”

THE doctrine of the Resurrection of the body, in which we so constantly profess our faith, and which is asserted in so many passages of Scripture, is one which has always been particularly incredible to the heathen. Thus, at Athens, “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter.” Thus, in the present day, we sometimes hear of savages expressing the greatest abhorrence of the doctrine that the dead shall rise, and shrinking from the thought that the enemies whom they have once slain shall arise again to trouble them. The most philo-

sophical of the ancient heathen had such views of the necessary corruption of *matter*, that they conceived of moral purity only in proportion to the refinement of the soul from earthly admixture; and the announcement that the body, after having been laid aside, was again to be united to a purged soul, seemed to them no promise of redemption and emancipation, but rather a return to chains which they hoped had been laid aside for ever. The heathen populace, though they clung to the belief of an immortality—at least for great and glorious souls, for heroes and men eminent for strength—yet supposed that, for the most part, the spirits of the departed were but the shadows of their former selves, thin ghosts, living in the memory of the past, and regretting the days of their vigorous life. Some, indeed, had persuaded themselves of a transmigration of souls; or of the recurrence of events after a cycle of years; whilst the Egyptians employed the greatest skill in preserving the body after death, believing that while it continued in being the soul would be preserved from extinction. In the East many, and those the

most contemplative minds, looked forward to the reabsorption of the human soul into the divine essence; but of the restoration of the human body they did not divine.

It was on such a world, so confused, that the light of the resurrection broke, and with calm confidence proclamation was made, “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He, that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal *bodies*, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” The resurrection of Christ was to be the example of what should happen to His people. Stones are to be rolled away from the doors of *their* sepulchres; angels to attend *their* awakening; the garment of the flesh to be resumed by the soul, and the dead to be given back to their friends, that so the Saviour may be the First-born among many brethren. No sooner had He risen, but it became evident that a new glory belonged to the body, as well as the soul of man. His was now a spiritual body, insusceptible of decay, though retaining its old character, and recognised by former friends. It dispensed with food; it was translated

into heaven. From this Body it was declared that other bodies should be quickened; that He was risen as the Second Adam. It soon became more and more evident that Christians must feel and speak concerning the body in a very different way from heathens. They could not speak of *that*, as necessarily depressing the soul, which God had given to be its handmaid. They knew now how sin might be ejected; that it was not a necessary accompaniment of matter, seeing it was not found in the body of Christ. As it was with a body that God first created man in His own image and pronounced him good, so they could understand that it was but completing the idea of creation, and restoring what had been lost by the Fall, for the Gospel to speak of man, in his perfect state, as endowed with a rescued and re-edified body, as well as with a purified soul.

It may be that none, but God Himself, is altogether immaterial. Perhaps every created being, however high in intelligence, however pure and subtile, is yet not without some vehicle through which his immortal spirit is

tied to act: and, with regard to man, we know that, in the only states in which he has appeared glorious, he has been embodied. I allude, of course, to the first and the Second Adam. We know not how far souls, when separate from the flesh, exert activity; or whether, in the intermediate state, though they have not their complete ancient bodies, they may not be in some sort connected with matter; but this we know, that while we live here, we have a strong instinct that our bodies are parts of ourselves; and though we may on reflection think that the eye is no more than a telescope, and that we should continue to exist, whatever might become of our bodies, yet language witnesses in a wonderful degree for their being in some sort part of ourselves. There is a violence, an unnaturalness, about the separation of soul and body, a shrinking of the flesh from it, a love of life as a strong passion in all, that marks how fearful a part of punishment is the laying down of the soul's tabernacle. Very noticeable, therefore, is it that Scripture represents the disembodied, intermediate state as an imperfect condition, in which the right-

eous do not wish to be detained, but out of which they cry "How long, O Lord?" and turn with eager expectation to the Day of the completed Regeneration. Till that day the Lord has promised to guard the Christian's dust; at that day He will raise up again the same body that was laid down; the same body, we venture to say, notwithstanding all the difficulties which may be urged against the assertion,—though the ashes of martyrs have been scattered to the winds, though the remains of saints have been borne by rivers to the sea, by the sea to many shores, and have passed into other substances; though it may be urged that the elements of a man's body are in a continual flux and change, and that the particular particles with which he happens to be connected at the time of his death, are not more properly himself, than other particles which in the course of his life have belonged to him, and then before death dropped away. These are indeed difficulties, which we know not how to explain; but we know that the restored bodies of the saints shall appear the same, shall feel the same, shall be the same. What identity

consists in we know not, but whatever it is which is necessary to make the body be the same body, *that* shall be found in it at the resurrection. Nothing is impossible with God; the arguments which would oppose the assertions of Scripture are what we rightly call rationalistic,—a misuse of reason, an application of falsely-called reasoning to subjects which are not within its province.

Now as helps to assist our belief in this great and startling mystery, let us remember that, as man was originally created out of the dust, it is less difficult to conceive that he should be a second time created out of it.

Next, do we not see a repeated resurrection going on in nature round us—the seed passing through decay to life, the death-like chains of winter unbound, animal and vegetable life returning? Shall the wailings of the old heathen poets be true, that for the trees their leaves return, for the fields their flowers, and that man alone is to experience no return, but that *his* place is to know him again no more?

Shall not the wonderful vitality of some

seeds shew us how long an element of life may be preserved? Shall the grain of corn laid in the tomb more than two thousand years ago, along with the body of an Egyptian, spring up and bear fruit, and shall not the more precious body itself revive?

If such, then, be the doctrine, let us see what are the uses to which to apply it. First, how much does it help our expectations of retribution? In the bodies wherein they sinned shall men be punished; the tongue that maligned shall be parched, the frame that ministered to sin shall become a magazine of torture. Most men are sadly corporeal and animal, the pains and pleasures of their bodies affect them out of all proportion to what they should do, and therefore it is that God sends them this warning, that the body which sins shall be the body that is punished.

Next, what definiteness does this doctrine give to our expectations of another world? We can conceive the life, the pleasures, the employments of such beings as we know ourselves to be. We may look forward to recognitions, to hearing those whose voices we

long to hear, to seeing those whom our eyes desire. We may look forward to rejoining them, not in some vague, unsubstantial state of being, in which we never knew them, but in their actual selves as we knew them, only not soiled and disfigured by the toils and struggles, the blemishes and infirmities of earth, but transformed, transfigured, radiant with glory, with that beauty developed which is in every human form and every human countenance, though here so often hindered in expressing itself. What comfort should this blessed doctrine give to those who are consumed with the passionate desire of their departed, to them whose hearts continue bleeding because their loved ones are not. What satisfaction does it not promise to those desires of which the heart is sometimes conscious, desires of sitting at the feet of some saint of old, of hearing those lips unclosed on which hung the grace of life, of seeing those to whom, unknown, we yet owe so much, the mighty teachers, the great benefactors, the holy examples, who have glorified this earth and enriched their successors. God grant us "to see the felicity of His people,

and rejoice in the gladness of His chosen, and give thanks with His inheritance."

Again, see what the belief of this doctrine has effected, with reference to the feelings of Christians towards the bodies of their dead. Soon the heathen practice of burning the body disappeared; the holiest ground was sought for wherein to lay the departed, with their feet turned towards the East, that they might be ready to rise and meet their Lord at "that day." The remains of martyrs were preserved with the most anxious care, as what God would greatly honour, when He returned to recompense. The Christian's dust has become a sacred and awful thing, which God counts, which angels watch; we honour our brethren's remains, we provide for something more than decency, and bear the body forth with some show of triumph, as that which is not laid aside for ever.

Again, how should this doctrine increase our zeal for the purity of the body, our care to restrain appetite? Surely the Christian learns to look on his body with reverence; this is his self-respect, not a mere worldly feeling of dignity, which can give no account

of itself, or a wrong one; with him it is a sense of the dignity of restored, redeemed man. He feels himself the recipient of untold benefits, the object of unceasing care; his frame is big with mysteries which need an eternity to unfold themselves in. He will not injure that which is to be his companion for ever. He will be careful over that which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and will consider himself as the warden of that temple's sanctity.

Again, as the expectation of the Resurrection leads the Christian to treat his own body with care and reverence, so it increases his compassion for his suffering brethren. Shall their bodies be so precious in the eyes of his Lord, and of no account in his? Shall not their hunger, their nakedness, their squalidness, their sickness be more distressing to him, as he thinks how glorious those bodies are designed to be? Shall the brother perish for whom Christ died? Is not each one a king, whom it is an honour to succour in the day of his adversity, and who will remember it with pleasure when he shall meet us again, invested in his robes of beauty

and majesty? Surely the consideration of this doctrine should lead us to look forward with passionate desire to the consummation of all things, to pray for nothing so much as the coming of the kingdom, when the regeneration, which is already begun in the souls of the saints, shall be perfected in their bodies.

And now, brethren, draw we near by faith to partake of Christ at His holy Table, that His blessed Body may be to us a seed of immortality, according to His gracious saying, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

SERMON X.

ON A SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.—SELF-RESPECT FOUNDED ON THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY.

PHIL. iii. 21.

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

SOME of the wisest heathens of old felt that *self-respect* would be a most powerful instrument to moral strength and improvement, but it was difficult to place this feeling on any secure basis: fallen and corrupt as they were, not able to distinguish between the flesh and the spirit, not knowing what to think of conscience, not aware that they had been created in God’s image, they still felt that there was something awful and venerable within them. Yet, though for their souls they might have respect, it scarcely occurred to them to deem highly of their bodies.

For this reason it is less wonderful that they defiled them with lust and drunkenness,

that they reduced their brethren to slavery; looked on the body as necessarily corrupt, and sought to divorce and emancipate the soul from it; inflicted on criminals cruel tortures, putting men to hideous deaths, and burning the bodies of the deceased, as what had done their work, and were only to be got rid of.

How different are a Christian's views! he respects not only his soul, of which I do not purpose to speak to-day, but his body also,—not only because so curiously part of himself, that he feels it an exaggeration to speak of it as only an instrument; respects it not only because of its elaborate workmanship, which Christian men alone have dared to gaze into; not merely on these natural grounds, but it is on account of its connexion with Christ that he cannot help considering it as somewhat sacred.

All things about a Christian are sacred: the corporate body, of which he is a member, meets together, and from its occupying a building, the place is called a church, and is consecrated, from the Church thus hallowing it. And as the whole body thus communicates its sanctity to what it touches, so

may each individual do. Each may have a Church in his house ; he may do all things in the Name of Christ, he may put the Name of Christ and the Cross of Christ on all belonging to him. Now if, from coming in contact with him, other things acquire a new dignity, much more that which is so close to him, his body : it is the temple of the Holy Ghost ; it is leavened with that sacred Body of whose flesh and bones we are members ; and on this account the Christian feels a respect, an almost sacredness, belongs to his food, his clothes, his dust, which otherwise he would think unsuitable to a sinner. If God has deemed so highly of this our earthly tabernacle, what are we, that we should shrink away from His grace? If He counts the hairs of our head, knows what we have need of, watches over our dust, and has promised to raise it again in incorruption, glory, and power, surely it becomes us to exult in His grace.

Let us look on these bodies as part of what makes us like Christ. He resumed a body when He had completed the atonement ; He did not cast it aside, as what had done its work, but carried it with Him into the highest heaven.

He retains a human body, He ever will retain it : were we to be without bodies, we should be so far less like Him. Let us say, These are the eyes, this is the body, with which I am to meet my friends departed, with which I look to converse with angels,—nay, with which I look to commune with the Son of Man Himself. It is now gross, but it shall then be refined ; now slow, but it shall then be nimble ; now needing rest and food, then independent of them ; now weighed down with infirmities, then shall it see the King in His beauty ; now tainted with the motions of sins, then pure ; now too like the flesh of sinners, then conformed to Him, the King of saints.

On how many points of duty do these considerations bear ! All that is natural and suitable to our bodily constitution is hereby justified and sanctified : our natural appetites are not to be at once and totally condemned, but only need rectifying, controlling, subduing to higher ends. Hunger, e.g., is in itself unblameable, as is the desire to relieve it and the pleasure in satisfying it. But this, and other appetites, though necessary to our pre-

sent state of existence, are not intended hereafter to accompany the body, and here are to be strictly confined to their proper ends. God has caused hunger because men's bodies are continually wasting and need repairing ; lest they should forget to recruit them, they are reminded of their need by the sharpness of appetite. God has also made whatever is natural pleasant, and therefore attached pleasure to the gratification of appetite. But, while the Christian consequently holds his appetites not necessarily sinful, he labours to reduce them, by God's aid, to *that* place in *his* system which they held in the Son of Man : to assert for his spirit independence, to keep his body subject, to gratify it at no devil's suggestion, but only according to the will of his Father ; to watch lest the fumes of it dull heavenly contemplation ; to mount from things earthly to things heavenly ; to labour most for the bread of life ; to have meat to eat which the world knows not ; to make his meals almost sacramental ;—this is to follow His example Who, on the one hand, hallowed the wedding feast, and went with those that invited Him ; while, on the other, He rose

before day, fasted in the wilderness, left home hungry for His work, and had to crave water in the thirsty noontide.

The Christian too attaches, henceforth, a kind of immortality to all belonging to his body. He thinks of his dust reposing in holy ground, near some church, till the day of the resurrection. He is buried with his feet toward the east, ready to spring up and meet his returning Lord. He cannot think of the countenances of his friends with indifference, but believes their future selves will be a continuation of the present,—that every human countenance has designed it by God a beauty of its own, which here obstructions and infirmities may prevent from appearing, but which shall hereafter be fully displayed.

And as these thoughts exalt his respect for himself, so do they greatly increase his care for others. He cares not only for the souls of men, but for their bodies also; which are, on these accounts, more precious to him than they would otherwise have been. It seems more cruel to leave a brother's body in want and pain, when we remember that those features are not so unlike the features of the Son

of Man, those members that we turn from uninterested are near and dear to God. The reason of the command, "Honour all men," is hereby understood. Surely, too, the belief in the resurrection of the flesh has had much to do with erecting Christian hospitals, and inflaming Christian charity, and providing for the decency and honour of the Christian grave. No longer are malefactors put to unnecessarily painful deaths, or the bodies of men slain in war mangled, or is it thought right that men should be held in slavery, for man has a recommendation in the eyes of his Christian brother, which the heathens knew not of. Even man's body is felt to have something to do with that image of God in which he was first created.

It is impossible to enforce too strongly or too early on children the duty of self-respect in connexion with the dignity of the redeemed body. If they are properly taught the honour of the Christian body, they will see many things in a higher light than otherwise would have been possible. In common things, such as cleanliness and order, they will see something more than common. They will hate

gluttony, they will abhor lust, they will be ashamed of cruelty, they will be preserved from irreverence. Age will be more sacred, infancy more attractive; the sick more affecting, the dead more precious; themselves more wonderful, God more nigh.

The more sanctities and mysteries that we are surrounded with, the better; the more of the occasions of daily life that we connect with something unworldly, the more are we likely to escape the corruption of the world. And is it nothing to lay hold of that vast region of men's attention which the concerns of the body occupy? to have something to apply to the body's food, its clothes, appetites, pains, death? to be able to say to beauty, What art thou, compared with what is to be? and to deformity, Thou art supportable, for thou shalt not always be?

Again, we read in lives of saints, both in early and later times, what sanctity their friends felt was attached to anything that had come in contact with them. This feeling has a strong hold in human nature; persons of very different ages and schools bear witness to it. Let us look for the

truth which is connected with it. The Christian *does* invest all he touches with sanctity. Let us be such that we may be felt to leave this odour behind us ; let us touch nothing without in some sort consecrating it ; asking for a blessing on our meals ; sanctifying the couches on which we lie down, the clothes we put on, the grave in which we are to rest : when sick, believing that the assistance which the physician renders, is Christ's own healing ; claiming ever from our risen Head the glory, the power of His body to be conveyed to our body, that ours may not weigh down the mind,—that ours may be pure, active, in control, a handmaid to the spirit ; that we may have high views of the closeness of the connexion between us and our Lord, and feel that an invitation to sin is an insult to Him ; believing that His human body makes Him especially near to us, capable of sympathising with us ; and if here we endeavour to walk as He walked, our bodies of humiliation shall one day be redeemed, shall be made like unto His glorious body, shall have repeated in them the victories of His, shall know His strength, joy, glory, and immortality.

Let us, then, claim our bodies from sin, look on them as belonging to Christ, keep them as His temple, serve our brethren with them, submit them to pain and death when He requires us, commit them to Him as a precious deposit, and expect them again from Him in a blessed resurrection.

SERMON XI.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—THE NAME
OF CHRISTIAN.

Acts ii. 26.

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

WE heard on Whit-Sunday of that coming of the Holy Ghost with power, after which the knowledge of Christ was no longer to be a treasure possessed in secret by a few, but to be freely imparted to every creature under heaven. We were then taught concerning the power which went forth to induce men to believe. Last Sunday we were led particularly to consider the doctrine so set forth,—what it was that the apostles preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,—namely, the full and perfect doctrine of the completed revelation, God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Renewer of our race. To-day, brethren, I invite you to go a step fur-

ther, and to consider how the doctrine so preached was received in the world, and the effects that followed. No good man, though he be only a man, lives and dies utterly in vain ; no merely human teacher forms a school of disciples, and lays down his life for truth, without some effect following : let us recall to our minds what He effected who taught as never man taught ; who laid down a life which no mere man could lay down, for it was the life of Him that was the Son of God.

This, then, is what He effected ; this Christendom which to-day is worshipping together ; this which is filling the churches of this land, and of so many other lands ; this Christianity which kings honour, and nations profess. It is no difficult philosophy, found only in books ; but it is that which is next the heart of thousands of thousands, the life of their life, that which alone makes life bearable, which is making the most afflicted cheerful, and the dullest very wise, with its mysteries, which the deepest minds cannot fathom, and yet the simplest child can make his own ; a faith, a brotherhood unchanged by time, which has survived all assaults, which has formed saints

and martyrs to do a work on earth, and stored them in paradise when their work was done. Oh, how doth He see of the travail of His soul and is satisfied ; how did His kingdom spread, like the leaven, like circles on a lake widening ; from the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost to five thousand ; from five thousand till they ceased to reckon by thousands ; from Jerusalem to Samaria, and Damascus, and Antioch, and Athens, and Rome ; like the waters in the prophet Ezekiel : “The holy waters that issued out from the house, he measured a thousand cubits, the waters were to the ankles ; he measured a thousand cubits, the waters were to the knees ; he measured a thousand cubits, the waters were to the loins ; he measured a thousand cubits, and it was a river that I could not pass over, for the waters were risen waters to swim in, and everything shall live whither the river cometh.”

Now we might take any point in the progress of the Church and dwell on it, and find instruction in it ; but I propose particularly to consider the name which was given to mark our Lord’s followers, and the circumstances of

the Church at Antioch where the disciples were first called Christians. The Church at that great city, which was queen of the East, the chief city of Asia, and the head-quarters of luxury, owed its origin to persecution : “They which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Antioch, preaching the Lord Jesus ; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” Thus in a most unlikely city, in a time of weakness, were the foundations of a great Church laid by men perhaps in themselves of no special mark, for even their names are unrecorded. But so evidently was the hand of God with them, that when St. Barnabas came with apostolic power to supply what was wanting among them, he *saw* so much of the grace of God, that he was glad ; and by his influence, and that of the great Apostle St. Paul, whom he introduced to Antioch, much people was added unto the Lord. Then it was that the disciples were first called Christians. It would seem that the Spirit of God gave the name, or moved them to take it, or to accept it ; certainly it was a name which

the Jews would have been most loth to have bestowed upon them : let us see what account may be given of it.

First, then, it was taken to supply a felt necessity,—the disciples wanted a *common* name ; those men of Cyprus and Cyrene, these new converts of Antioch, the saint fetched from Tarsus and he that was sent down from Jerusalem, the Hebrew of the Hebrews, the Jew of the dispersion—they felt the want of a common name, they wanted to sink all that separated them, to merge all remembrance of distinctions that had divided them, to forget what they had been, and to have something to help them to remember what they had become : they had now so much in common, for time and for eternity ; a common cause, truth, faith ; one heart, one mind, one mouth ; they had all things to such a degree common, they were so ready to share all they had with any of their body that lacked ; they so felt that they were one body, animated by one spirit, that it was not natural to continue without a common name. This is the first point.

Then it was a *new* name that they wanted, for the thing which it was to denote was new ;

it would not be enough to be called Jews, for they were not all necessarily Jews, not the only Jews in the world ; it was beginning to be seen not to be necessary that men should become Jews at all, in order to belong to the Christ of the Jews. A new thing was in the world, faith in God Incarnate ; a new style of character, a new love, even to the laying down of life ; a new dread of sin, a new power of surmounting it ; a new hope of immortality, a new brotherhood, embracing men of all classes ; new powers of healing, new desires, reaching even to the bearing each other's burdens, and serving all, and being lowest and least esteemed, and enduring all for love's sake. Truly a new name was wanted, when God was making all things new. This is the second point about the name,—it was new.

Again, an *expressive* name was wanted : all names should express the *nature* of a thing. They had been called by their enemies Nazarenes, but this conveyed an imperfect view of them, for our Lord was not born at Nazareth ; they had called each other brethren, but so did the Jews ; they were called among themselves the disciples, but this did not in itself

sufficiently distinguish them ; but this name of Christians—this expressed all, this shewed that what distinguished them from all others was, that they had found the Christ. They were not like heathens, who knew not what was meant by a Christ. They were not in quest of a Messiah, like the Jews, but had *found* Him. It was not a *secondary* doctrine with them, it was the centre and spring of all ; it was not a doctrine *concerning* Him which they preached, so much as *Him* ; Him not only in one office, but in all His offices ; not as King only, or Priest only, or Prophet only, but as Christ, which embraces all. It is for this reason, that among all the titles of our Lord we single out this as *the* one in which to express our faith, saying, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” This is the third point about the name,—it was so expressive, so characteristic.

Now, brethren, if this be the account of the origin of the name which we bear, see what follows : surely it will be well for us to return to the original principles of our institution, to turn back and enquire what those principles were, and revive and regain them. In a merely human institution, it is generally the

wisest plan to endeavour to enter into its old spirit, to try to cast ourselves back and discern what principles lay at the foundation of that which we inherit. We cannot well reform and improve what we find, without entering into the spirit of the original founders, and learning what they aimed at, and how they endeavoured to accomplish the end which they proposed to themselves : and ours is no merely human institution ; God Himself is her Builder and Maker, her foundations are upon the holy hills ; God Himself laid deep her foundations, never to be removed. The principles are of eternal application, of infinite value, and of universal extent.

Surely we still want a *common* name, and those lessons which it should convey to us ; we want a witness to remind us how vast is that which we have in common, and how trifling are those things which separate us. Surely, if we are to act together, to mix together, to dwell together, to pray together, we want more of a common spirit. The Spirit of God is an uniting Spirit, melting down differences, casting men in one mould, imprinting on them one character. We know among

men what a bond of union it is to be of one blood, one family, to bear an earthly name in common ; and should it not be a bond of union to bear this heavenly name in common ? And, brethren, let us not content ourselves with wide, vague feelings of a general love to Christians, and a fancied fellowship ; let us make this real and practical, by cherishing a brotherly love for those Christians with whom we have to do ; acknowledging the claims they have on our love as Christians, not content with having to do with any one without endeavouring to love him ; that is, to study his interest and his pleasure, his true interest, his lasting pleasure, whether he know it or not, whether he accept it or not. This is Christian love : try yourselves, brethren, whether you have it ; whether you have it, not towards men in general, but towards your next-door neighbours, towards your in-door associates, towards your servants, towards your labourers, towards your masters. Have you *much* in common with them, or have you *little* in common ? can you act with them, or can you not ? Seek to be such that men can act with you ; study gentleness,

mildness, a yielding, sweet, subdued temper ; which meets with things that ruffle others, and is not ruffled ; that is amongst provoking men, and is not provoked ; that receives injuries, and does not feel them *as injuries*; that meets with unkindness, and makes it the occasion of doing kindnesses. Let us bear with others as we bear with members of our own family. How much is borne with at home, that men will not bear with from strangers ! Why ? Because there is so much love in the one case, which they set against provocations, and they make excuses, and accept explanations, and remember past kindnesses, and say, "I know he does not mean it." Now this home-feeling of brotherhood the Gospel extends to all ; it is of this we should be reminded when we think of Christians as a common name. But then, brethren, we shall never attain to this feeling of brotherhood, if we allow our minds to dwell on what distinguishes us from others. If we allow ourselves to think we are cleverer, or have more influence than others, or have more riches than others, and that these are important distinctions by which chiefly life is to be regulated,

then we shall more and more be fostering a separating spirit ; rather should we look at every gift as not of ourselves, as only entrusted to us for the sake of others, only enabling us the better to serve them. Alas ! brethren, little do we know how greatly we may need the help of others ; how the highest may come to be dependent on the lowest ; how the strongest may need the weakest ; how the wisest may come to be more ignorant than the foolish ; how giants as they seem, in grace, may need to be corrected, guided, comforted by babes. Times of distress come, times of sickness, or spiritual anxiety, or temptation, or sin, and the strong are strangely weak, and are glad to come down from the pinnacles where they have been wont to glorify themselves, and fall back on the Christian charity of the brethren they once despised. This shews that we are more to each other than we sometimes think.

Again, the new name of Christian befitted, I said, the new thing which the world then first saw ; and we, brethren, it becomes us that our conduct be indeed different from that which any other name expresses. A style of conduct befits us which is above that of hea-

then, and above that of Jews and Mahometans : these misbelievers may be honest, true, just,—but a Christian should be all this, and something more ; he should have the love which sacrifices itself, the charity that bears all, the faith which knows a reconciled God, the enlightened conscience, the strengthened will, the quickened affections of a redeemed man who is already restored in great measure to his inheritance ; he should have a peculiar character, which no other name would express ; so that it should be said of him, he acts strangely, but it is no more than a Christian should do ; he forgives like a Christian, he denies himself like a Christian, he gives alms like a Christian, he delights in prayer like a Christian : surely there would have been no need of a new name, had there not been something new to describe, something peculiar, which no other name was equal to denoting ; something which the heathen remarked and wondered at, and did not know what to say of it, till they said, “ Oh, the man is a Christian,—that explains all ; that explains why he will not come to the cruel shows of the amphitheatre, why he will not sacrifice to the image

of the Emperor, why he is so strict." Brethren, is there this something so peculiar about you that, were you cast among heathens, they would want a new name to denote your temper? Should we make ourselves felt, if a few of us were cast into a great heathen city, such as Antioch was when the few private Christians, scattered by the persecution that arose about Stephen, entered it? Should we hang together, do such kindnesses for each other, live such sweet, pure lives, be so known for our honour, integrity and charity; have such burning love for souls, such confidence in our possessing the truth, that by spiritual might we should establish Christ's kingdom in the world's stronghold, and, spite of luxury, pomp, and power, gather much people to be added to the Lord? Nay, brethren, without asking what we should effect in other circumstances, what are we effecting here? Are we here seen to be full of love? Do we seem the better for going to Church? Do we love persons the more for meeting them there? Is this a peculiar bond of union to us? Are we felt to be Christ-like, and to be worthy to be named after Him?

For, thirdly, remember this was the last

point we remarked about their name, namely; that what was selected to mark Christians was their relation to Christ ; they were His. They could not explain themselves either to themselves or to the world, but by telling of Him ; of what He had been, of what He was ; of what He was in Himself, and what to them. That which they came to teach men was not so much that they must accept certain doctrines *about Him*, as that they must forsake all else to be grafted *into Him*, to be married and united to Him,—must take Him to be Lord of all their faculties, and devote to Him the body, soul, and spirit which He had redeemed. It is to be feared that too many among us live without that reference to Christ which our name expresses : take care that your name condemn you not. It is a fearful thing to be a Christian only in name.

And as we have seen the reason why this name was adopted, and the duties it should put us in mind of, so observe that it ought to be a *sufficient* name. It is not well, when persons are led to call themselves after the names of *men*, when they belong to sects and parties : we should call no man on earth our father ;

we should refuse to be partisans ; we should stand, as much as may be, on common names, expressive of the whole body to which we belong, rather than of schools and opinions within it. *Something* more than Christians we *must* call ourselves, for the confusions and divisions of the time require us to give the necessary watchword, whereby to distinguish our comrades in the night-battle in which we bear a part ; but let us add as little more as may be, and even this with regret ; praying that the time may come when it shall be Christians against the world, and no longer Christians against each other.

Lastly, brethren, I cannot help noticing as very remarkable, that just in that portion of the Acts of the Apostles where the name of Christians is first introduced, we have in immediate connection, as it were, with their new name, a remarkable act of Christian charity : the Christians at Antioch are informed of a famine soon to take place at Jerusalem, “ Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa ; which also they did, and sent it by the hands of Barnabas and

Saul.” They recognised the claim which those at Jerusalem had on them as brethren, they determined to send, and they carried out their determination,—“ which also they did ;” they gave every man *according to his ability*. Now here is a lesson for you.

SERMON XII.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—THE APPEAL
TO EXPERIENCE.

JOSHUA xxiii. 14.

“And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth : and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.”

THUS spoke Joshua, when the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, and he felt that he had waxed old and was stricken in age ; then it was that he called for all Israel, their elders, their heads, their judges, their officers, and exhorted them.

His had been a remarkable life : he had come forth out of Egypt, had known its plagues, the wonders of the Red Sea and of the wilderness ; had been allowed to know Moses intimately, as, perhaps, none else did, being his minister ; had traversed the land of promise as a spy, and seen its terrible cities

and giant rulers. When his companions died around him, he remained unharmed, till, of those that came out of Egypt, he stood almost alone ; one after another had left their carcases in the wilderness ; even Moses, his master, was only allowed to see the land ; and the time came when Joshua found that the charge of this great nation had devolved on his shoulders. Moses charged him, and God honoured him : he saw the vision of the captain of the Lord's host, and he went on encouraged.

His had been a favoured mission—to lead to conquest and victory a believing, obedient, and united people. Again and again had the Lord fought for Israel : the might of the nations had proved feeble ; walls had fallen flat before them, the sun and moon had stayed at man's voice, and hailstones from heaven had maintained the cause of God's people.

After victory, Joshua had discharged the happy duty of dividing the good land among the tribes ; he had seen the settlement made in order and peace, and submitted to with cheerfulness. He had, too, the unspeakable pleasure of seeing his own influence, and that of the elders that accompanied him, tell in

some measure on the people for good. "They served the Lord all the days of Joshua ;" and now, having so long laboured among this people for their good, he makes one effort more, before he is taken from them, to preserve to them all these privileges.

He appeals to their experience : they knew in all their hearts and in all their souls, that not one thing had failed of all the good things which the Lord their God spake concerning them. They were in possession of houses that they builded not, wells which they digged not, vineyards and oliveyards which they planted not ; no man had been able to stand before them—one had chased a thousand. No just expectation had been disappointed ; the land was what God had declared it to be, and beyond all human probability they were seated in it. But as God had been true to His promises, so would He also be to His threatenings. In the law were curses as well as blessings ; and they might know, by the exactness of the Lord's fulfilment of his engagement to bless them, how complete would also be the punishment which would follow sin. As all good things are come upon you, so shall the

Lord bring upon you all evil things. They might pull down so rare a felicity, and destroy a state of things of which the world never saw the like. They might fall before enemies whom they had proved contemptible, before foes cruel and vile. If they fell, they would fall in no common way, but to a depth of misery unequalled.

And now, brethren, does not this seem a suitable Sunday for urging something similar on you? As Joshua looked round and saw his people wonderfully brought out of Egypt and planted in a good land, so do we behold ourselves, now that Easter, and Whitsuntide, and Trinity are all passed, at last conducted by a succession of wonders, and put into full possession of Christian truths and privileges. The kingdoms of the world have been, in great measure, taken possession of in the name of Christ, the Lord has given us rest from all our enemies round about; it is time now to appeal to experience, and to ask whether anything has failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us. We have the experience of eighteen centuries to make answer. Surely, wherever the Gospel

has been received, there slavery has been, by degrees, abolished or mitigated, women elevated, charitable institutions established, education diffused, good laws ordained, paternal governments established; the poor have been cared for, and the Gospel preached to them; the leaven has wrought, and untold benefits been provided for all classes. The Scriptures say, "Righteousness exalteth a people; . . . ye shall be a delightsome land; . . . them that honour Me I will honour; . . . the leaves are for the healing of the nations;" and not one of the expectations raised by such promises has been disappointed. Now, as all these good things have come true, so will also come true all the judgments denounced in God's Word on apostate nations, a destruction like that of Jerusalem in the days of the Lord's vengeance.

But, brethren, cannot I appeal to your experience about matters nearer home,—the affairs of your own bosoms, your own knowledge of life? Might not one that knew you well sit down beside each of you and reason with you? may not your own conscience thus argue with you? "Ye know, in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of

all the things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof :" whatever your parents and teachers held out to you as the rewards and consequences of right conduct, all are come to pass unto you. They told you, God told you through them, that a lie would only serve a purpose for a moment, and would degrade your soul, lead you to tell other falsehoods, make you ashamed, would dwell on your conscience, distress and haunt you ; and that, on the contrary, truth would make you fearless, erect, and hearty ; that truth was naturally consistent with itself, helpful to all virtues, loved by God and man. Now, have you had no experience of the happiness of constantly speaking the truth ? have you not found yourselves believed, when circumstances made against you, trusted in spite of appearances, and respected ? Have you not found the testimony of conscience sweeter than any outward reward ? and, from being yourselves sincere, had the happiness of believing and finding others to be so ; known, in short, that this world is not a world of lies, and mockery, and deceit, but that a God of truth

made it, and rules over it, and reveals Himself to all sincere and painstaking lovers of truth.

Again, you were told that to resist appetite and passion was manly and noble—that it was but to resist at first, and the difficulty would daily diminish; that it was but to hold out and refuse to give way, and to suffer the irritating pain of a short annoyance, refusing to sell your birthright for a momentary gratification, and that by degrees resistance would become habitual, easier and sweeter every day; that self-control had its joys, and a constant will its own proper glory; that you sank in the scale of beings as you gave way, and mounted as you held out against the solicitations of the flesh. You were told that peace of mind, usefulness, intelligence, and activity, were greatly dependent on your fighting out the first and most important struggle in life, the struggle with the flesh and its appetites; that if a man could govern himself, he had advanced a long way towards helping others. Now, I appeal to your experience whether these things have not come true, whether every successful struggle with appetite has not brought its own reward?

Again, you were told, at starting in life, how great were the advantages of honest industry, of the labour which God has appointed unto men, and which they cannot lawfully decline ; you were told it would sweeten enjoyment, was a condition for a healthy state of body and mind, would serve to bring you into connection with the worthiest of the living, and make you follow in the footsteps of the noble dead ; and have you not found that honest labour is good for man,—makes him respectable, helpful, and contented ? If you have not declined duties, not thought chiefly of making yourselves comfortable, but of discharging the offices imposed upon you,—have not crept into quiet corners, nor made your own nests soft as God never intended they should be, but, in the sweat of your brow, or the labour of your brain, have striven manfully to be useful in your generation, and do your duty in that station of life where God has placed you, then you can bear witness, I doubt not, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which you were led to expect from industry.

Again, you were told that humility was a great help to happiness,—that the man who was lowly in his own eyes avoided many rubs and frets which annoy others; that not being taken up with himself, he had eyes to see many excellencies in others; that not having his own consequence and reputation as his constant object, he was most truly independent; above all, that God gave grace to the humble; that it was the character of the life of the Lord Jesus, the true pattern of man, to live on God by prayer,—that He asserted not an independent will, but was meek and lowly in heart, living a creature-life, and conforming Himself to the laws of that human nature which He had taken to Himself: and have you not found that, as far as you put aside pride and overcame vanity, you began to recover that image of God in which you were created; that you were never so strong as when, aware of your own weakness, you betook yourselves to God, that He might strengthen you; that when you glorified yourselves and despised others, you were cutting yourselves off from

the source of all nobleness, and that when you walked humbly before God and man, you walked safely.

Again, you were told of all the good things that would attend upon unselfishness ; that if you acted generously, with consideration of others and forgetfulness of self, not thinking of your own interest or pleasure in the first place, but seeking how you could make others happy,—how you could promote their temporal and eternal good, being ready to forego what you had set your heart on for love of others,—that then you would taste the truest pleasure, that sources of enjoyment would be opened to you beyond your thoughts, that God would make your happiness and welfare His especial care : and is there no experience to which I can appeal on this head ? have you never known the sweetness of doing a generous action, the satisfaction when, after a struggle, perhaps, you have overcome covetousness and given up some advantage to benefit others,—the delight of foregoing some pleasure that you might cause the widow's heart to sing for joy ? have you never tasted the delight of seeing others

happy, and felt yourselves rewarded for the pains you had taken to make them so? Surely you can in some measure testify that not one of the good things hath failed which you were led to expect from unselfishness.

But it is time to reverse the picture, and as Joshua reminded the people that God, Who was faithful to His promise, would be equally faithful to His threatenings; that as all good things were come upon them, so would the Lord bring upon them, if they provoked Him, all evil things; so must we now testify to you, and take God to witness this day, that you too, like the Israelites, may throw away a position of unequalled advantages; may fall before enemies most despicable and cruel, and so may sink to a depth of misery only proportioned to your privileges. These things, which were true of Israel of old, are true to a much higher degree of the new Israel of God. Nor, indeed, are we left merely to conjecture as to the evils which God may be provoked to inflict upon us; here also we can appeal to experience,—we can say, Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that so far as

you have disobeyed God, He has already brought upon you evil things. Have you no experience as to the misery of untruthfulness? Can you remember no deviation from the exactness of faithful truth, which has since cost you many a pang, which has risen up as a witness against you, when you were sitting down to enjoy some pleasure, which has checked your prayers, and made you desire to unburthen your heart, at the cost of any shame, rather than continue with that gnawing grief in your conscience? Let this be a token to you of the evil things which God in His justice has sworn to bring on those that disobey Him.

Again, have you no experience of the evil of giving way to appetite and passion, of the increasing helplessness which grows upon the soul, as habit gets power over it, and with daily more reasons for abhorring his sin, and less pleasure in it, the man finds himself a slave to it, till indulgence seems necessary, and arguments lose power, and resolutions are broken, and the will enfeebled? Yet even this is but the beginning of the punishment which the Lord is bound to inflict, if men do

not turn ; for the condemnation of the wicked shall be this, viz. that they shall be given over to the power of these passions,—that, having no means to gratify them, they shall yet be torn asunder by the restless desires which they might at first have subdued, but which then shall be their tyrants for ever.

Or take idleness, and say whether you know not in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all which the Lord your God spake concerning it. Surely you have found it was its own punishment, that it destroyed your power of enjoyment, by making you listless and dissatisfied, whilst you have seen the industrious man hearty and ready to be pleased ; your experience can testify to you that idleness opens the door to all vices—that ungoverned thoughts, evil companions, which you would now, perhaps, fain shake off, found their way to you, in consequence of idleness. When the Lord shall bring all the evil things that He hath spoken upon the indolent, this shall be their punishment, that they shall be deprived of the power of labouring ; that, as they would not use to God's glory the talents He gave, these

shall be taken away. The decay of power, which you have found idleness naturally engender, is but the beginning of that complete deprivation which the Lord shall inflict when He shall make good His threatenings : " From him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath."

So, again, as to pride and vanity, is there no experience to which we can appeal ? have you found out none of the ill consequences of allowing these sins ; have they not, in as far as you have given way to them, made you look to the praise of men instead of to the praise of God ? have they not gone to make the soul hollow and unreal, deluding itself with shows of virtues which it did not possess, and concealing from it the knowledge of evils which needed to be probed and cured ? Has not vanity made you greedy of applause, sensitive of neglect ; laid you open to many wounds, and put you in the power of those who for bad ends would foster your sin ? And these evils, again, have been in mercy inflicted, under God's good providence, now, that you may be warned of the greatness of the punishment which He has in store for those who

persist in provoking Him ; for the proud and the vain shall one day be left to themselves, separated from God and from the realities of goodness, and shall find that creature-praise and admiration, whether the creature be oneself or a multitude, are less than nothing and emptiness.

And to take the last case which I touched upon : has not your own bitter experience convinced you that the selfish are monsters in a world where God is love ; that the secret of happiness must be to be conformed to the God who governs all, and that, as far as we have preferred ourselves to others, we have been unlike God, and therefore miserable ; that self was never meant to be the centre round which our thoughts should circle, but that our bliss is to live to Him who died for us and rose again, and to the brethren for His sake ? Have we not found selfishness restless, manifestly diseased, knowing not what it wants, craving for some object, and then disappointed on attaining it, and craving again for something beyond ? Have we not found it hated and unlovely, preventing others from acting with us, and robbing us

of their love, which our hearts assure us is the best thing friends have to give us? And is not this enough to enable us to conceive what shall be the misery of those whom at last God shall give over, and shall allow to be for ever separated from Him and from their brethren, and shut up in the narrow selfishness which they have chosen as their lot? Oh, surely, as “all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off the good land which the Lord your God hath given you.”

While we count on God’s faithfulness to His promises, let us remember that He is also faithful to His threatenings. He does not speak and not execute. “He is not a man, that He should lie, nor the Son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”

SERMON XIII.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PSALM XXVII. 4.

"To behold the beauty of the Lord."

WHAT a beautiful world it is, after all. In the sweet spring-time, when all things are green and joyous, go forth on a clear, fresh morning, and when your heart is light, and nature seems like a youth full of hope, starting with vigour on a day of pleasure, say if the world is not beautiful. It is so in ordinary scenery, in a climate which is but moderate; how much more is it so where vegetation is luxuriant with tropical richness; or where the air, and light, and heat are attempered to an exquisite perfection; or amid the lovely valleys of mighty mountains. And if Nature is beautiful, Art is hardly less so; with its choice gardens, filled with beauties collected from

every clime ; with its rich galleries, stored with the highest productions of the great spirits of all ages. Nor is it only sights that are beautiful ; every sense has its peculiar pleasures, every faculty of the mind its proper food and recreation. Lovely are the holiday-scenes which sometimes gladden us, with an universal cessation from labour, and a general enthusiasm ; men's hearts all stirred by an emotion unselfish, great, and national—a people rejoicing in the presence of their honoured sovereign ; beautiful are the halls of our legislature, with their historic recollections ; our calm cathedrals, with all their holy peace ; our sheltered groves of quiet learning ; beautiful at all times, and especially when any occurrence calls forth the peculiar spirit of each institution, and shews it in its best. Surely there is no need of proving how full this world is of beauty.

But let us also observe that not only has God made the world beautiful, but has given us eyes to see its loveliness, and minds to enjoy it. He sends a newborn child into this lovely world, and little by little teaches him to admire and enjoy its adornment. Every year,

as the mind opens, the range of its knowledge expands, and its power of enjoyment increases : education cannot proceed without daily opening new avenues to pleasure. The poor man who never leaves home is able, through books, to enjoy the discoveries of distant regions, and the characters of bygone ages. It only requires leisure and cultivation, and the materials for enjoyment lie round about us in all directions. Every science has its beauties, its revelations of the handiwork of the Almighty ; its pleasures attending the conquest of difficulties, and its surprises at the novelty of unexpected discoveries. So much more than mere utility and convenience has been consulted in the construction of the universe, such large provision has been made for our pleasures.

But what are all these material and intellectual charms compared with moral beauties ? What is a fine prospect to a generous heart ? what is a ravishing picture to the contemplation of one act of Christian heroism ?—And God of His grace has largely enriched the world with noble and saintly deeds, the memory of which has been preserved for the joy of posterity. Nay, not only in past times, but also in our own,

each one of us may for himself see cases of patience, forgiveness, contentment, self-denial, consideration of others, gentleness, peacefulness, benevolence, which gladden the heart that becomes acquainted with them, and gratify our admiration of moral and spiritual beauty.

One knows, alas ! that there is another view to be taken of both the outward and inward world ; that in the one are storms, inclement seasons, pestilences, filth, discomforts ; and in the other hideous and painful deeds which afflict the beholder. But we believe that, while the beauty of the world is to be ascribed to the Lord, its foulness and misery are in contravention to His plans. What beauty did he not intend us to exhibit and to enjoy ! He devised for us bodies of elaborate workmanship and minds of rare capacities ; He intended men should be lovely separately, and much more beautiful in societies—in the unions of families, of friendships, of neighbourhoods, of Churches and nations. He designed that each should be lovely by attaining his own proper perfection, filling his own place, doing his own work ; amid endless variety composing all together a perfect whole, and exhibiting unity

by together conspiring to promote His glory. Each, being thus beautiful himself, would have rejoiced in every brother's excellence. O brethren, when we see aught of the beauty of the world, in nature, man, or books, should it not elevate our minds to conceive what the Lord intended this world to be. If such be the beauty of even a fallen world, what must the unfallen have been? what will the restored be, when the creation shall no longer groan and travail in pain together, waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God, subject to vanity, but shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God? This is the chief use to be made of loveliness; for this we should cultivate a taste for it; for this we should endeavour to clear away the dust, and filth, and unsightliness which obscure things, and see beauty in poor men's cottages, in plain men's words, in simple landscapes and wayside flowers. God has scattered it all around, and not, we may be sure, for nought. Surely we should be ever saying, This lovely weather, this gay scene preaches to me; it calls upon me to be lovely too, inwardly beautiful, lest I be cast out of

the world—lest I have no place in the day of the restitution of all things. God has fitted the world to man, and man to the world ; He has made the one beautiful, and I must see to it that the other becomes so, for He will one day gather out of His kingdom all that offends His eye, all that is unlovely—even as a man roots up the weeds that deface his garden. “ Pluck me not away, neither destroy me with the ungodly and wicked doers.”

If He has sent us into a lovely world, and given us eyes to see its glories, and made us able to admire what is noble, it is that we may ourselves become beautiful ; first inwardly here in this world, amidst its dirt and discomfort, but hereafter outwardly lovely also, with all accomplishments suitable to the dignity of beings made in God’s image, and restored by the Son of the Highest. Whatsoever things are lovely, says the apostle,—if there be any virtue, think on these things. Our God is ready to impart to us a moral and spiritual beauty ; not that of angels, but that of the Lord of angels,—a beauty proper to man, but never exhibited to perfection but in the Son of Man. By the power of the indwelling Spirit He offers to

conform us to the likeness of Him in whom dwelt purity, sweetness, lowness, love, and peace. This is a loveliness to which the un-educated, the poor, the afflicted may attain, for it is the Spirit of God that works it ; and let not any one say that it has nothing to do with outward beauty, with scenery, fine arts, literature, poetry. God intended all things that are lovely to be united together ; sin only has separated them—grace will one day reunite them ; for they that are Christ's, all things are theirs. Count, therefore, very precious any moments in which the beauty of the world is revealed to you. When you consider the heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained,—when any work of art thrills you,—when any noble enthusiasm fires you,—above all, when any moral beauty is revealed to you, let it be a call to you to exert yourselves, and cry for grace, lest such things should not be for *you*—lest the feast be spread, and *you* be shut out.

But I have said nothing yet of the highest beauty—of absolute beauty. In God only is the sum of all perfection ; His creatures are good, yea, very good ; but what is He, Himself ?

He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all ! This beauty we may behold even in this life : the Psalmist, under the old dispensation, speaks in the text of beholding it, and surely, therefore, Christians may see it ; only let the one thing we desire be to know, to love, to have experience of, to praise His goodness and His beauty.

In order to behold His beauty, we must “dwell in the house of the Lord ;” we must have found favour with God, and have obtained a right to abide in His presence ; we must know Him, as our God, the God to whom we have devoted ourselves, whose we are, and whom we serve.

Happy we, if this be the *one* thing with us ; it is the one thing needful, which makes a man independent of all else, and enables him to despise all fears, and live above all anxieties. They that behold His beauty, “enquire in His temple ;” they consult the oracle, as surely as David, by the ephod of old ; their way is pointed out to them, and their steps ordered. Brethren, this beauty of the Lord is to be seen only “in the face of Jesus Christ.” In Him has the Father been pleased to reveal Himself,

the light of the glory of God is to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. A *little* of that glory was, of old, to be seen in the Jewish sanctuary, and the mercy-seat ; the *fulness* of it is embodied in the Son of Man. His beauty we may behold every time we read the Gospel, every time we study His grace in His saints, or His providence towards ourselves. To behold His beauty is to be transformed into it ; the countenance of the Christ affects all that gaze on it ; His meekness becomes theirs ; His gentleness passes into them ; they are “changed by the Lord the Spirit from glory to glory.” To behold His beauty is, to become beautiful ; to see Him as He is, is to become like Him. This, and this alone, is the ultimate satisfaction of all our love of beauty, all our admiration of loveliness. This is why we never see anything in this world that fully comes up to the idea which God has printed in our minds, for He intends that we should push on unsatisfied, past the creature, on to the Creator ; past the part, on to the whole ; past the copy to the original, even to Himself, Who alone is worthy of us,—to Him for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things.

1. And as we seek *this* beauty, let us less esteem all other, think less of it for itself, in itself; deem it what a Christian may be content to waive for the present, knowing that his desire for it shall be gratified, at the right time, by the Lord, who will provide for all his wants.

2. Let us feel the unsuitableness whenever earthly grandeur or beauty are associated with moral turpitude: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion," and so is a handsome Absalom without piety, a rich Nabal without liberality, a wise Solomon without self-command, a strong Samson without steadfastness, a Herod that gives not God glory, an Herodias' daughter gay without a good conscience.

3. Let us remember that, as beauty, rightly understood and rightly associated, is the inheritance of all the sons of men, it is our duty not only to seek for ourselves our own birth-right, but to put others in the way of obtaining theirs. Let us help to make their souls beautiful, by imparting knowledge, by culture, by training them to graces, by lifting them out of all that defaces and impairs humanity.

So shall we continue the work of Christ on earth, and procure more mirrors in which His glory may be reflected. He greatly desires the beauty of souls, the beauty of His bride^a.

4, and last. The beauty of the Lord is to be symbolized in His house : “the place of His feet should be made glorious.” All spiritual truths should have outward expressions ; and so in all ages, and among all nations, it has been thought proper that the building separated from profane and common uses, and dedicated to the worship of God, should represent somewhat of the quiet, the majesty, the order, the harmony, the light, the beauty of the place where God dwells.

* Ps. xlv. 11.

SERMON XIV.

TEMPER.

1 PETER iv. 8.

“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.”

FEW faults are more common than ill-temper, none more need notice from the pulpit; for it is sad to think how many persons have a reputation for religion, and stand well in the estimation of their fellow-Christians, as zealous, bountiful, and orthodox, who yet are grievously deficient in amiability. I have heard of panegyrics pronounced upon persons of much repute in religious circles, which had always to be qualified by an apology for defects in temper. I fear there is many a man whose name is conspicuous on subscription-lists, who is a leading man in a religious party, whom yet, if you could follow to his home, you would find the tyrant of a domestic

circle, a torment to himself and to those whose happiness is bound up with his own. Some of the greatest men look very small when the curtain is drawn, and they are seen undisguised in their undress at home.

By ill-temper I mean an unjustifiable indulgence of sour or violent feeling, when the law of love is forgotten, and, merely because persons will not control or subdue themselves, they displease others, and violate their duty to them. Temper shews itself in the child : he meets, we will say, with a punishment, and, because he will not be reformed, he refuses to acknowledge his fault, revenges himself, as it were, on his superior by refusing to give his mind to what is required of him, and very often brings himself to such a state, by this indulgence of his passion, that he is made quite ill by it ;—if it be a lesson he has got to learn, he comes to that pass that absolutely he cannot learn it. In such ways will strong temper shew itself even in young children ; while with older people it perhaps takes such a form that, like Nabal, they cannot be spoken to, even by their best friend, though he speak with no other object but to promote their

interest. Or they will get excited, and, because they have met with some injury, some indignity, they will be lashed into a very storm; will use words which afterwards they have no *recollection* of having used, for they have been carried beyond themselves. Or their temper will assume the shape of sulkiness: they take offence at some reproof, and because they can vent their displeasure in no other way, they determine to make others feel that they are aggrieved, by shewing themselves vexed, uncomfortable, and proud. A strange state is sulkiness, where a person is very wretched, but has a pride in choosing to remain so, under the hope that by and by some satisfaction will be made to his wounded honour. Till he obtains redress he nurses his displeasure, instead of letting kindness dissipate it, or the lapse of time bring it natural relief; like the heathen Indian who seeks satisfaction by planting himself at his adversary's door, and will die of hunger if he obtain not his demand. See how much self-will there is in ill-temper, for in all this there is a disregard of duty, an indifference to any consideration of what God's will may be, an

absence of any care for a brother; it is all self from beginning to end,—this paltry self, how it is to be humoured, flattered and gratified. And just as in the young, temper often becomes uncontrollable, and though it might have been curbed at first, yet after a time gets such a head that it makes the child really ill, so too in the case of the adult, violent passion often becomes something very much like insanity: men are thrown at first into what we call fits of passion; during the paroxysm they are beside themselves; then these fits recur more frequently, are of longer duration, and more violent;—or, while men continue sound of mind on other points, their views get warped in one particular direction; they take up against some one person a prejudice, which takes such a hold upon them that no amount of reason can afterwards dislodge it. Frightful is the havoc that passion may thus make in a fine intellect. Remember that ill-temper is not like some sins, which appear to injure only a man's self. It is one great aggravation of this fault, that it causes so much sin in *others*. Every person who is cross, morose, and sour, tends to put those that mingle with

him out of humour. An angry man inflames his adversary, hot words provoke other hot words, violence leads to violence; retaliation is all that is professedly aimed at, but soon each party becomes in turn disproportionate in the revenge he exacts. Sullenness closes up the hearts of many in the circle round, besides the man's own heart. Violent reproofs on the one side lead to hasty actions on the other; a child too severely chastised is unwilling to return to a parent's roof, a daughter exposed to too public censure feels herself disgraced and takes to bad courses, when she would have borne a moderate reproof, and might have been reclaimed by kindness. Or, what is, alas! of every-day occurrence, an ungoverned tongue or a jealous spirit makes a home so uncomfortable, that, to escape from its miseries, a member of the household flies to intoxicating drinks, or excitement away from home. Surely the saddest quarrels are those between persons who ought to be tenderly attached; and accordingly, to see husband and wife, parent and child, at enmity, is far more distressing than if the quarrel were between persons less

closely connected. Now, of these domestic quarrels, it is certain that by far the greater part arise from faults of temper; from allowing a habit of self-will to be formed, and a man's own passion to prevail over the voice of duty and the dictates of reason. Ill-temper is frequently the instrument by which mean minds make themselves formidable, and carry their point in the family. Often one who has no right to take the lead or decide measures for the rest, comes to have an extraordinary sway, for no other reason than that it is necessary to yield to him in order to secure tolerable quiet. But power so acquired is not good for its possessor: he who, instead of serving others, is always making others bow to him, has very little likeness to the true Christian character. Nor let any one take refuge in the excuse which lies so near at hand, that temper is very much a matter of physical temperament,—that a good temper is, like a good constitution, natural to some people; and that men are to be excused for being fiery, wilful, jealous, stern, cross and petulant, on the ground that they were born so, and cannot help themselves.

Now, brethren, we may allow that some are more tempted, through their physical and mental constitution, than others ; some have very unfavourable circumstances, live with very provoking companions ; all this is true, but it is not enough to excuse sin. If we once see, distinctly, where the essence of sinfulness in this matter is, we shall no longer think that the sin of ill-temper is to be excused and palliated, any more than other sins. Men *can* control themselves, if they will ; they *do* manage to control themselves when they have an interest in doing so, when they have anything to gain by self-command : e. g. those who are most ungovernable, and perfect tyrants among their own family and towards inferiors, will yet, when they have to do with superiors, put up with a great deal, control their emotions and refrain their tongues. Now what they thus do for a time from considerations of worldly interest, they plainly could do on every occasion, if they saw it to be their duty, and had grace to set about it. No doubt, if they have formed a habit of using violent language, of storming in order to get themselves obeyed, of sulking in order to get

attended to, they will find it difficult to change *this* habit, as they would any other habit of long growth. Of course it would have been easier in tender years, when the mind was yet pliant, to have avoided getting at all into such ways; but the difficulty of changing, the inveteracy of habit, are, of God's grace, overcome in other instances, and must be overcome in this. We must strive after the amiable perfections of the true Christian temper. "Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,—we must think on these things." We must imitate Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." We must seek for that charity which St. Paul describes as suffering long, and is kind, and not easily provoked. We must seek to bear one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. How many are the New Testament injunctions bearing on this head:—"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" "Forbearing one another;" "Be ye angry and sin not." Nor in the New Testament only: in the Old Testament also there is much referring to this duty:—"He that is slow to anger is better than the

mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression." "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house." How lovely are those Christians whom we are sometimes happy enough to meet with, who have attained to great control of temper and sweetness; people whom you can scarcely put out,—who have a kind interpretation to place on everything, however offensive,—who bear an inextinguishable love to every one they have to do with, and are not thinking of themselves, their own dignity, their own interest, but in each provoking person they meet, consider only how he can be taught, warned, and corrected, not how their own consequence may be protected, or their own feelings soothed. Nor let any one rejoin, that this sweetness of temper is wholly physical, that some have a natural placidity, and others cannot help being irritable; for there are numerous instances of men originally having the most awkward, unaccommodating tempers, or the most fiery constitutions, and yet, by

divine grace, becoming very models of patience and self-command. Blessed are such, yea, blessed according to those beatitudes which the Saviour pronounced on the mount of His great sermon, as He marshalled before His mind's eye the nobles of His kingdom, the poor in this world, rich in faith, whom He delighteth to honour :—“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Who can recount the combinations of vexatious circumstances which have tried the patience of God’s secret ones? Some bodily diseases have a peculiar tendency to irritate the temper: what grace is required to sustain the daily fret of such infirmities! How provoking have often been the relatives who should have made home happy,—misunderstanding character, misinterpreting motives, from inadvertence opening sores which should have been kept closed, and rubbing in salt where the wounded spirit is most inclined to wince. Yet there are those who never make any but the right answer, under whatever provocation; whose complaints are made only to God; who have a glad look

under each annoyance, and blunt the edge of every insult by returning kindness for unkindness. Do we ask how such sweetness of temper is to be acquired? Surely we are to look to no lower source, but to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. If the dove-like presence of the Spirit be within us, the peace of God shall *keep* our hearts and minds—*keep* them as with a guard, in spite of a disquieting world around. We are specially bidden not to grieve Him who vouchsafes to take up His dwelling in the heart. We *do* grieve Him when we grieve our brethren in whom He dwells; we *do* grieve Him when we indulge in fretful, unkind, exasperated feelings towards others. He would fain be a rejoicing Spirit within us, and if *He* be grieved, what else can make us glad, i. e. safely, truly, lastingly, worthily glad? Whatever, then, allies our spirits to the divine Spirit, and obtains for us the great gift of the divine presence in the heart; whatever thrusts out that which is displeasing to His holiness, and furnishes, so to say, the heart for His residence, *that* will tend to make us loving as He is loving, gentle and patient as is He. This is the great topic;

and among other considerations, such as these may be useful: if you would really have the mind of Christ, live much in the thoughts of God; suffer not yourselves to be wholly taken up with your fellow-men,—their actions, words, conduct, or feelings towards you,—but lift *up* your hearts: *Sursum corda*. When men are provoking, appeal (not noisily, but) silently to God; consider how He regards matters, how He deals with them: He is strong and patient, though provoked every day. Be you strong, and you will become patient; strong over your own rising dissatisfaction and irritation. This is true strength—not to be passion's slave, but passion's master. The man whose mind is elevated by converse with God and thoughts of Him, he has higher standards whereby to judge of things than the world measures by; and provocations which would be great to others, are small to Him, for He sees things somewhat as God sees them.

But the Christian not only can stay his mind on the thought of God, but he can also refer all things difficult or adverse which befall him to his heavenly Father, to be by Him dealt with. He has but to go into the sanctuary

—the sanctuary independent of place, which earnest prayer can at any time enter ; he has but to spread the matter, whatever it be, before the Lord, and the God to whom He appeals can bring good out of the most provoking evil, and reward the patient and subdued spirit by enabling it to see its troubles transmuted into occasions of grace. Then, again, a great preservative against ill-temper would be to have a more lively recollection of the sacred fellowship which subsists between members of the Christian body. “ Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.” St. Peter enjoins on the husband due regard for the wife on this ground, viz. that otherwise their prayers will be hindered,—those prayers which they should offer in common. O brethren, endeavour so to treat every one as to be in a state of mind to pray with them ; let your thoughts, with regard to them, be not very far off from a prayer. Look on those whom you are mixed up with as companions for eternity, as being heirs together of the grace of life, as those with whom we have to work, to suffer, to conquer, and to triumph.

How shall men work together for a great common object, unless prepared to forego much self-will, to be content to fall into another's ways, and to be put out of their own. We know that, living separately, persons form each their own set of habits; but combine them together, be it for only a short journey, or some easy work, and there is no proceeding in comfort, except through mutual accommodation and forbearance. As surely, then, as Christians are described, as members of one family, soldiers in one army, members of a common household, pilgrims to a given point, working to a common end—as surely as co-operation is needed, so surely are mutual consideration and forbearance; in one word, sweetness of temper. And if sweetness of temper is needed by all, so is it especially needed by different classes of men: by governors, lest they make *them* unhappy who are placed under *them*; by servants, that they may accommodate themselves to that which is in itself so trying, i. e. having to do another's pleasure; by the young, because they have to gladden others; by the old, because *their* temptation is the want of cheerfulness.

And O brethren, *defer* not seeking this good gift from God: it should be acquired *at once*, lest times of bodily pain or mental distress come, and the habit be not formed. How hard to *begin* to try to be sweet-tempered when wrung with bodily tortures, or when you are the mark of unjust asper-sion. I beseech you, before the evil days come, ere the character be altogether fixed, while, by God's grace, you have yet power over yourselves, "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kind-ness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiv-ing one another, if any man have a complaint against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" or, as St. Peter saith in the text, "above all things have fervent charity among your-selves."

SERMON XV.

DRESS.

1 PETER iii. 3.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.”

I INTEND to speak to you to-day on the subject of dress; and let no one think it unbecoming to handle the subject from the pulpit, for it certainly occupies a good deal of people's thoughts and attention, and it is desirable to guide those thoughts and direct that attention to proper and legitimate objects. All that interests mankind ought, in succession, to pass in review before the pulpit, in order that each matter may receive all the light that can be thrown on it from divine truth, and that the fallible opinions and fashions of the day may be tried and adjusted by comparison with a permanent and infallible

standard : also, in treating of such subjects, we are only following the example of Holy Writ ; many times do we find the subject of dress brought forward in holy Scripture. In the third chapter of Isaiah are recorded God's judgments for the pride of the women, as displayed in the extravagance of their dress. The Sermon on the Mount was, I suppose, intended to be a pattern to ministers of what their discourses should be like, and there^a we find our Lord dwelling at some length on raiment.

St. Paul does not overlook the subject in the directions which he gives to Timothy^b : "I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety ; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array ;" while St. Peter speaks much to the same effect in the text.

Now it seems to me that the one piece of advice which is to be given about our clothing is, that it should be *suitable*,—suitable to us as men, useful for its purpose, doing its work to clothe our nakedness, keep us warm, shield us from the wet and the heat : this seems very

^a St. Matt. vi. 28.

^b 1 Tim. ii. 9.

obvious, and yet we know persons will sometimes, for fashion's sake, in their folly, adopt clothing which does not answer its purpose—does not properly protect them, but exposes their health to risk. Man's clothing is not provided for him, without thought and care, as the lilies of the field have their raiment direct from God ; his clothing does not adapt itself to climate, like that of the animals, whose hair becomes fur in cold climates and silk in warm ; but man's clothing, since the fall, reminds him of his shame, and is a matter of some expense and labour, like the house he inhabits, and the food he eats, and the fuel with which he warms himself. If we are to dress suitably to our position as fallen men, that will itself be a reason against vanity and display, against wearing things for the purpose of outshining a neighbour, against buying things because they are expensive, and what others cannot afford to purchase : simplicity and moderation become those who are sinners in a fallen world.

But, next, we should dress not merely as men, but as redeemed men, as Christian men ; as not only sinners, but sinners who have been

put in the way of recovery, and of becoming like the perfect pattern, the Divine Man. We do not dress in mourning, for it is a ransomed, rescued world ; our Lord hath gotten the victory, and is depriving sorrow of its bitterness. The body of the Christian becomes the temple of God, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit ; it is destined for something beyond decay and dissolution, even for a blessed resurrection, to be fashioned like unto the Lord's glorious body : something of the reverence, then, with which we treat whatever belongs to God, attaches to the human body.

On this ground, in part, at least, I should put the duty of cleanliness : it is not only as promotive of health, as due to others, that cleanliness is a duty, but as seemly for a temple of God ; just as we think these material churches, which are also God's temples, should, as a matter of respect to Him to Whom they are dedicated, be kept in cleanliness and decency. Let thy garments be always white, says the wise man ; and we have a better reason to say so than ever Solomon knew : the inward joy and gladness of the Christian may fairly express itself in outward

emblems. You wear black in Lent, when the Church betakes herself to penitence, and casts herself into the posture of a mourner beside the cross ; but it is not unnatural to see a congregation exhibit their joy at Easter even by means of the change of raiment, which the glad season seems to call for. But though the Christian's dress need not be sombre or doleful, it should be grave, sober, and modest : this is the truth which the sect we call Quakers have taken up ; and though we do not approve of their mode of witnessing for it, (which is formal and ridiculous,) yet a truth it is. They saw the inconsistency of luxury, extravagance, ostentation, and vanity, and thought to save their members from these faults by a rigid uniformity ; let us try to attain the same end in a more judicious way,—valuing simplicity as much as they can do, and being as ready as they, when need is, to submit to some ridicule, for trying to act like Christians. But to return to what I was saying : a Christian will have a respect for himself, even for his body, as belonging to Christ, closely connected with his risen and glorified Lord, and he will feel that neatness,

order, tidiness, are in the spirit of his religion, and that slovenliness and carelessness are inconsistent with it ; whatsoever things, however small, are lovely, and of good report, he is to attend to. When a man becomes religious, he should be seen to improve in every way,—in the method with which his household is managed, and in the propriety and good taste displayed in his outward arrangements. Most likely it was with reference to dress that St. Paul wrote to Titus^c, that the presbyters' wives should be in behaviour as becometh saints.

Next, let me say that the dress should be suitable, not merely to a person's general position as a Christian, but to their particular walk in life, whatever that may be. Dress must be, in some degree, expressive of our different positions, employments, and ranks ; what would be very improper in one class is perfectly suitable in another. I do not suppose the apostles meant literally to forbid the use of gold, of pearls, of precious stones, of braided hair, and elegant garments ; such things are the appurtenances of persons of rank, and serve the use of manifesting what

^c Titus ii. 3.

they are. But we should none of us dress above our station, or have houses, furniture, equipages, beyond what our position makes suitable; indeed, as the world is constantly tending to excess in these matters, and one is tempted to vie with another, the Christian will do wisely in all these matters to live *below* his station, *within* his means,—putting up with things inferior to what others of his class indulge in; considering not only what others do, but what is suitable to his age, his office, his income, and the claims of others on him: and O brethren, if we do bethink ourselves of the claims of others on us, how ready we shall be to deny ourselves much of that which is now bestowed in a foolish compliance with the unmeaning and excessive habits of those round us. How many poor widows are there whose last days might be cheered with a few luxuries which would do them no harm; how many struggling families are there to be assisted; how many heathen, abroad, to be brought into the fold, how many heathen at home to be reclaimed; how many churches and schools to be built: and might not vast sums be saved for these purposes out of the

sums which men lavish on things quite unnecessary? How much might be saved on the furniture which is procured from slavery to custom, on the entertainments which are given to excess, on the clothes which are extravagantly worn, on the tobacco which is foolishly consumed!

When a servant dresses so that you mistake her for her mistress, *she* is not dressing suitably; when a mistress dresses out herself or her children with money that ought to have been given as tithe to the service of God, *she* is not acting suitably: but though extravagance costs much, good taste costs nothing; there is no reason why persons should not dress becomingly, so as to give pleasure to their friends, if only the mind be occupied with better things, and regard personal appearance as (what it is) a very small matter. Alas! we know how the female mind in particular is wont to be distracted by attention to dress; how church will be resorted to (it is shocking to say it) greatly as a place for shewing off clothes; how, even in the house of God, persons will be noticing what so-and-so has got on, and wondering what remarks are

made on themselves ; how the thoughts will wander from the prayers or the sermon to this absorbing matter. Need I remind you how many young girls have been led by love of dress to vanity, levity, and so to their ruin ?

I have said that we should dress suitably to our condition as fallen men, as redeemed men, and suitably to our position in life ; next, let me say that there is no harm in suiting ourselves to the various occasions which are usually accompanied by an alteration in our dress. We wear mourning to express sorrow for our departed friends, though the blessed assurance of a glorious resurrection for those who sleep in Jesus, should make the Christian exclaim, O death, where is thy sting ? Yet, because natural feelings are not to be suppressed, but to be purified, refined, and guided by the Gospel, therefore we think it allowable to wear mourning, and exhibit other outward marks of sorrow.

So it is natural for persons to wear their best attire on Sundays, at weddings, at christenings, at the feasts of their friends, on any occasion of joy, when body and mind both claim to have part in festival or holiday. We

are not all body, nor all mind, we are compounded of both; and in religion, as well as everywhere else, neither is to be neglected. But while the Christian would delight to adorn a church in honour of his God, and for the sake of the poor, to whom it is everything, he must be more cautious in adorning his body, that other temple of God, lest he minister to vanity. He cannot consider himself (would that he could) as so much God's temple, that no sin stirs within him; so that, on the whole, with regard to his body, he feels that the time for its adornment has not yet come; sin is, at present, too much mixed with its composition; it is like a house the walls of which are infected and must be taken down to get rid of the plague which has lodged within them: but when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, the Christian shall have for a body a building of God; mortality shall be swallowed up in life; He shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality. Then will have come the time for the adornment of the body: at present, says the apostle,

we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; the flesh is an enemy to be subdued, not a true self to be indulged.

Finally, my brethren, and you, my sisters, in particular, observe how the apostles Peter and Paul, like skilful teachers, are anxious to divert, as it were, into another channel, the desire to please and the love of ornament, which exist in all, and in the female sex particularly. When St. Paul has said what women should not set their hearts upon, as being not true and worthy ornaments, mark how he proceeds,—“Let them adorn themselves, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works;” so says St. Peter,—“Let the adorning be, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.”

Under a plain, simple, unremarkable dress, is to be contained what the apostle calls the hidden man of the heart; i. e. in our hearts, hidden from the world, is to be formed the new man,—man as he ought to be, modelled

after Christ : there is to be a gradual process going on out of sight, produced by the action of the Spirit of God on our minds,—a process requiring pains and exertion on our part ; a formation which the world can only judge of by its results, but the meek and quiet spirit will partly shew it ; and this is, in the sight of God, of great price. It is Him, not man, we must try to please, it is for Him we must dress ourselves. He judges not as man judges : the world admires the witty, the brilliant, the amusing, persons of good manners, dressed in the best style, fit for the first society ; but He approves and delights in the meek and gentle, the lowly and self-denying, the patient and the contented. How often have we passages in holy Scripture borrowing this image of dress. Put off all these as filthy clothes, unworthy of a Christian's purity,—“ anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth ; lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness,

humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering," &c., &c.

Let every one consider, when they dress themselves, whom they are dressing themselves to please, whether God or man. Let them bethink themselves that what God looks to is the hidden man of the heart ; that it will be sad, indeed, to have bedecked the body, and arrayed it carefully for the eyes of men, if that which God looks to has been neglected. Slovenliness in the dress of the soul is offensive to God, far more than any outside slovenliness can be to man : there are such things as disorder, untidiness, filth, affecting the mind within, the hidden man. Let the garments of thy *soul* be always white ; bring them to Him who can sprinkle them with that which cleanseth from all sin ; walk in the light, and that shall keep them bright.

Cleanse us, O Lord, and keep us undefiled, that we may be numbered among those blessed ones who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, that we may stand before Thy throne, and serve Thee day and night in Thy temple.

SERMON XVI.

ZACCHÆUS.

LUKE xix. 8.

“And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

JERICHO was a very important town, and those, therefore, who farmed the revenue of its district had great opportunities of amassing wealth. Zacchæus, the chief of the collectors, had not failed to turn these advantages to account. He was rich, and had probably become so by practices not all honest; and the dangers of his perilous calling were not lessened by his having become rich, for the love of money grows with the possession of it; but his soul does not seem to have been engrossed by his wealth. It was a good sign that “he sought to see Jesus, who He was,” though the words seem to say that there was a mixture of curiosity in his anxiety. Still it was a good

sign, and perhaps shewed that there was something working in his mind. Nor was he to be turned aside by difficulties : “ when he could not for the press, because he was little of stature, he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was to pass that way.” And he had no high opinion of himself ; he did not think that such as he had any claim on the notice of the holy Saviour, he never expected to be taken into account ; and when, at last, the crowd that he had watched for came, and the Saviour appeared, attended by apostles and disciples, and faithful women, and a multitude, on their way to the great feast of the Passover, nothing could have surprised him more than to see the whole body at once *stopped*, as the searching, yet loving, eye of the Lord met his, and he heard his own name uttered by those lips. He could hardly believe his ears when he heard, “ Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.” It was probably as much a riddle to him as to any one else, what that “ must ” could mean, what could *oblige* the Lord to invite Himself there. “ And when they saw it they all

murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." Many were vexed that He had not chosen them to entertain Him ; not that they had any fitting desire to repay the love that made Him weary Himself on their account—not that they cared to house that head which had not where to rest it, to wash those feet that were worn for them in travelling ; but, without themselves having faith in His pretensions, they saw He had a great following, and was in high esteem with the people, and they desired the credit which would attach to those who entertained Him. Thus Simon the Pharisee had before received Him without true love and reverence. Others, again, who had no expectation of His honouring themselves with His presence, yet were offended at His going, not to a distinguished scribe, doctor of the law, or reputed saint, but to one who had a bad name as a publican,—"to a man that was a sinner," as they expressed it. So thought the multitude outside ; but they little knew what was going on within those walls where the Lord had retired, or within that heart which they despised. "He made haste, and came down,

and received Him joyfully." He was not one of those who desired to receive the Saviour for the sake of what *men would say*, but for his own sake did he rejoice; he felt that he was sick, and that the Physician had entered his house; that he was a great sinner, and that the Lord, by offering His presence, had assured him of His readiness to pardon. He saw the possibility of an entirely new life for himself. He saw that he could at once disengage himself from the snares which had been too strong for him; that he, too, who had well-nigh despaired of himself, might be allowed, as well as Matthew, the other publican, to follow; and in his joy and gratitude, with an honourable feeling which would fain justify Him who had sought that roof, "he stood forth and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." He determined to act at once, he resolved publicly to commit himself; as soon as he had formed the resolution he would announce it,— he would utter it as a solemn vow to the Lord, and entreat His approval of that to

which he engaged himself. Happy man, that he understood the value of that opportunity, that he saw what the occasion required, that he felt the impropriety of retaining any thing displeasing to the Lord Who had honoured his abode, that he expressed his gratitude by such an acceptable offering. Surely, if he had covered his board with all the luxuries of the world, or heaped his table with all the jewels of India, he could not have offered anything so acceptable as that earnest vow and hearty dedication.

And the Lord looked graciously on that which was, after all, His own work from first to last ; He pronounced it *good*, He set His seal to the transaction, and uttered the word that men longed to hear, to tell them what to think of all that they had witnessed : “This day is salvation come to this house, for that he also is a son of Abraham,” i. e. he has become so—a son of the faith of Abraham, become so in consequence of My visit to his house,—for the Son of Man has come to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost. How sweet were those words of the Saviour, which from time to time He pronounced, when He

completed a cure, or when He forgave sin, or when He gratified a request; for He made that which He gave more valuable by the words He joined with it,—words that confirmed the grant, that explained the gift, that assured the receiver that he had not been deceived, but might indeed call himself most blessed. Thus did He give Zacchæus more than he deserved or desired. He had sought to see Jesus, who He was, and he had found salvation.

And now to apply all this to our own day. How near may we be to mercies when we little think of them,—never so near as when we are little in our own sight, when we think others more likely to be honoured by favours than ourselves. Again, it is well for us to let no hindrances turn us aside; it was well for Bartimæus, well for the sick of the palsy, well for Zacchæus, that they were not deterred by difficulties.

And are not all God's favours much like this surprising of Zacchæus? are we not astonished that He should look on such as we? that He should know us by name, know our histories, and needs, and wishes? that He should single us out? that He should

confer favours on us so out of all proportion to our deserts, so sudden, so unexpected? Surely this is the character of all the divine favours. He knew us before we knew that His eye was on us. As He saw Nathanael, before that Philip called him, as He looked on the blind man before the blind man had eyes to look on Him, so He saw Zacchæus, so He sees us. Surely, if we would rightly consider them, His favours would surprise us as much as it astonished Zacchæus to hear that the Lord must abide in his house; we should say, “What am I? what is my father’s house? and whence is this to me, that my Lord should come to me? I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, and can it be that I hear, ‘Take, eat the body of the Lord, the Bread of life?’ can it be that Thou dost allow me to clothe Thee, to give drink to Thee, to feed Thee, to visit Thee, to watch by Thee? can it be that I have made angels glad, and added a new joy to heaven itself?”

And not only these blessings are thus beyond measure surprising, but so is each one that belongs to the mysterious covenant of

grace: that a private Christian may appropriate the promises of God to Himself and make them his own, that in a human heart the Holy Ghost may dwell, that men may have Almighty God for their Teacher, that prayer may be united to His intercession,—how wonderful are these to the soul that begins to realize them. Oh, brethren, when He thus invites Himself to us, let us make haste and come down, and receive Him joyfully. How great would have been the guilt, the loss, if Zacchæus had lost this precious opportunity from any false modesty, or unwillingness to alter his mode of life; and yet how many are committing such a fault now! He looks at them, and He pronounces their names, and He says, “To-day I must abide at thy house. I have passed by others, and I have chosen thee; I have passed by the heathen, I have fixed mine eye on thee; I look on thee as I looked on Peter in the hall when I brought him to himself:” for does not the Lord thus invite Himself to us, e.g., when notice is given for the Holy Communion? Zacchæus no doubt thought himself unprepared, but he durst not refuse: the house was

unfit to receive the Lord when He entered, but it was less unfit when He left it ; for the Saviour works wonders in the heart that receives Him, as He worked wonders in the house and heart of Zacchæus.

Surely, when Almighty God has conferred any great and unexpected favour on us, we should mark the occasion by some act like this of Zacchæus : if He has mercifully aroused us from a state of carelessness and worldliness ; if He has turned His eye on us, so that now sermons take hold of us, and the Bible seems written for us ; if He has removed any difficulties, cleared our views or strengthened our faith ; if He has favoured us with unusual advantages, or promoted us, so to say, in His school, by advancing us to the class of communicants, or teachers, or sufferers, or ministers,—however He may have come to us, let us signalize His entrance by some suitable offering. Here we may notice that what the publican did was of two sorts : he determined on restitution, and he gave to the poor. He resolved on restoring fourfold, if he had taken anything from any man by false accusation ; because he felt how inconsistent it

would be in him to retain it. Should he, who had found true riches, be careful for ill-gotten pelf? could he keep both? i. e. could he enjoy the presence of the Saviour and the presence of the accursed thing? did not the Lord, who knew all things, perceive the ill-savour of that hateful wealth? did not Zacchæus already hope for more than a passing visit? did he not hope, in some sort, to *retain* with him the guest who now honoured him; and, if he would retain Him, must he not banish all that was displeasing to His holy eyes? must the Saviour feast on that which was the fruit of sin? should not Zacchæus at once remove that which must give pain to so delicate a guest? He knew that honoured guest cared not for the provision made for His body, but *did* most earnestly desire to be regaled in soul; and the publican had grace to know that the most acceptable present he could make was the sacrifice of a sin. Brethren, does not this come home to us? If Christ is to dwell with us, must not all things be removed that can displease Him? must not we also feel the inconsistency of seating Him in the neighbourhood of our *sin*? perhaps Zacchæus' con-

science troubled him not before ; he had got so used to such practices, he had been brought up in them ; he knew, perhaps, of none of his class that did not think them necessary : but the presence of the Saviour touched him to the quick ; then he came to be in quite another state of mind, and things appeared to him very differently ; he would restore, and not only restore, but fourfold. And so, depend upon it, brethren, there are many things that you are accustomed to, which, in another state of mind, your conscience could not be easy about ; you may say now, “ Every one does it ; business could not be carried on without it ;” but the presence of the Saviour will set things in another light. Let us hear more of restitution, and restoration, and making amends ; let us hear of more conscience-money being returned to government for the taxes that have been evaded, and the revenue that has been defrauded ; let us hear more of old debts being repaid, of acknowledgment made for petty frauds, practised long ago,—more confession of injuries done ; let us hear of pardon being asked where character has been injured ; let us hear of pardon being

sent where it has been too long withheld. For God's sake let us find something of this honest feeling ; that there must not be these glaring inconsistencies,—men inviting Christ to their house by family prayer, by receiving the Holy Communion, by teaching others, by acting publicly on behalf of the Church, who yet retain something which offends a holy and jealous God.

Many are the inconsistencies which the presence of Christ should discover to us. Shall we not say, “ How shall I, that am fresh from that Holy Table, speak unkindly of my neighbours ? how shall I take pleasure in repeating their faults ? how shall I allow myself to lose my temper ? how shall I indulge proud notions of my own importance ? ” Let us remember how gladly the Lord receives the sacrifice of a fault, and endeavour every time He enters into our house to feast His eyes with such an offering ; every time we appear before Him to stand up and say, “ If I have been in the habit of this or that, I give it up.” It is plain, I think, that Zacchæus was not stating what had been his usual behaviour, but entering on an entirely new resolution, produced by the favour

our Lord had shewn him, for else it would have been boastful to have called attention to his good deeds ; neither, if this had been his habit, would the people so have murmured at our Lord's going to his house ; nor would the Saviour have so pointedly said, “*To-day* is salvation come to this house.” No doubt this was an act of love, made in the strength of the joy of the occasion ; made, as our vows should be made, “to the Lord ;” it was not boastfully that he called the attention of our Lord to his plan,—“Behold, Lord ;” it was in true humility that he did so, in order that the Lord might enable him to execute that which he now determined on ; he was taking shame to himself for his past sins ; he was obviating any blame that might accrue to the pure Saviour from contact with such a sinner, by shewing all men that the Lord had not left him that which He found him : He had found him *sick*, but He left him *whole* ; He found him an *extortioner*, but Zacchæus now pledged himself to Him and to all men, that the Saviour should leave him *repentant*.

Oh, brethren, let us not bring disgrace on religion, by giving occasion for it to be said

that the Lord leaves *us* no other than He found us ; that it is long since we professed, were confirmed, communicated, adopted this or that habit, but that hitherto we have not done aught to mark a change. Let us not lose any opportunity which He gives us. Zacchæus acted at once—acted decidedly ; had he put it off till the next day, he probably would have done nothing ; but he saw his opportunity—saw that a new life was possible. Oh that some here might see the same and would say, “ Why not I, why not I also ? why should not *I* stand forth and say to the Lord, ‘ Behold, Lord, to the glory of Thy name, I sacrifice *this*, I renounce *that* : Thou hast found it with me to-day, but Thou shalt not find it again ? ’ ” Brethren, ask yourselves what the Lord would demand from you, were He from out the crowd to single *you*, and say, “ Come down ; to-day I must abide at thy house ; ” would it involve parting with an evil companion, an idle book, an allowed idleness, a doubtful gain ? Whatever it is, sacrifice it.

But Zacchæus not only felt the inconsistency of retaining sin, or the fruit of sin, but he also acted out of spontaneous joy and gladness ; he

gave not only because he could not conscientiously keep, but he gave what he might have safely and allowably kept; he *was obliged* to restore, but he was not obliged to give half his goods to the poor. This he did out of a sense of the sweetness of the forgiveness which he was tasting: had he had so much forgiven him, and tasted such joy, and should he not make others happy? What was wealth now to him who had found the true riches? He did not look any longer to it for his happiness: what was it to him to be admired or envied, to outshine or dazzle? No; he had only *one* thought henceforward, one Being to please, and he would connect all with Him; he would entertain Him not once only, but even after He should have passed on,—he would feed Him again in His poor; the half of his goods would he give to them. And where are our offerings of love, my brethren? have we found nothing to make this world's goods look little in our eyes? found no pearl, no treasure? have we had *little* forgiven us, that we love little? were we not men that were sinners when He came to us? did He not *seek us* before we sought Him? has He not called us, and recalled,

and called again, and heaped many unexpected favours on us? and yet have we to be asked to give, instead of being *forward* to offer, instead of standing up and saying to the Lord, “Behold, Lord.” Have we felt no inconsistency in spending on ourselves, whilst many a Lazarus was lying at our doors, desiring our crumbs? Oh, brethren, is the time past for such acts of faith, for such offerings of love? Surely it is, because we knew not what our need of a physician was; we did not sufficiently feel ourselves by nature unfit to company with the holy; or else, when He, of His mere mercy, looked on us, and came in unto us, we should have received Him more joyfully; we should have understood that it was *salvation* that was come to us, and at the sound we should have brought out our sins and sacrificed them; we should have opened our treasures and dispersed them abroad in our joy; we should have given, and *He* would have accepted; He would have called *us*, too, sons of Abraham, and we should have known that the Son of Man was indeed come to seek and to save that which was lost.

SERMON XVII.

TENDENCY OF MEN OF THE WORLD TO DETERIORATION.

HOSEA vi. 4.

“ Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.”

THE state of a man’s bodily health is an interesting subject to himself, particularly if the question arises whether he is in the early stage of an incipient disease, which is likely to require painful operations, or to necessitate his retirement from business; but it ought to be a question of still greater interest to all of us, whether in moral worth we are improving or retrograding; whether we are attaining a resemblance to the true Pattern of men, or deteriorating. With too many, their “goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” The seed sown in their hearts looked promising at one time, but they bring no fruit to perfection. Now it cannot be

doubted that it is very easy for men to deceive themselves in this matter ; so many influences may simulate the action of God's grace, so much may be done from motives which are not really satisfactory. Is it not possible for a man to be amiable, and intelligent, and moral, and yet to have neglected the one thing needful ? Before we are fit for heaven, must we not love God above all things, and have sin expelled from our nature ? If this be so, how many does the Physician of souls discern to be in a most dangerous state, needing spiritual treatment for diseases of which they are not conscious ! No greater kindness can be done them than to open their eyes to the truth.

It is not necessary to deny the good that there is in the characters to which I refer ; I am not going to revolt their moral sense and irritate their opposition by saying that they have no virtues, or that God has taught them nothing ; but I do believe in the sure deterioration of those who are not being sanctified. One thing or the other,—either the Holy Spirit is sanctifying you, dear brethren, or moral disease is spreading in you, eating its way—slowly, perhaps, and latently—but very

surely and sadly. If you doubt what I mean, I might refer you to many cases in holy Scripture of deterioration of character. Saul's was such a case : when we hear of him first he is modest and courageous, and yet we know how he ends. Solomon, with all his powers and merits, declines. Demas forsakes St. Paul, having loved this present world. The love of many, we are told, will wax cold.

If a man wishes to be deceived, nothing is easier ; but if he is not afraid to know the truth, I would beg him to remember how far a man may go and yet not be religious. St. Paul was not afraid to say how far a man might go and yet be nothing, and I do not consider I am disparaging the value of good conduct and morality, when I attempt to shew how far a man may go on the right road and yet miss his way. " Yet lackest thou one thing," said our Lord to the young ruler, whom when He saw He loved for his natural amiability. The man went away in consequence of what the Saviour said, instead of being attracted to Him ; he was apparently lost in consequence of the strictness required : but the loss of him may have been the salvation of

many others ;—God grant that it may be of some here present to-day. “ All these,” said he, “ have I kept from my youth up ;” and in the same way many can point now to the character they have maintained from *their* youth up. They have laboured with honest industry, and that in itself was a great safeguard to them ; perhaps they were left poor, they had few to help them, everything depended on their own exertions, and while richer persons were led into vice by their abundance, their very poverty helped to keep these others regular and steady. Then, again, youth is easily excited to exertion by competition, and the struggle for the prizes of life tends to make many moral. All these are appliances which, in God’s good providence, He uses for cultivating character, preparing the soil for better things, and diminishing, if not eradicating, vice. We may be thankful for these influences, we may be glad for the good service they have done in our own case, or are doing in the case of others, but we must not estimate the result at more than it is worth. Then, again, in a Christian land the habits of society do something for men ; they discourage cruelty, pro-

faneness, selfishness, and drunkenness. The tone maintained in the newspapers and literature of the day is high on many points ; e. g., it promotes philanthropy. In most of the professions which have grown up in Christendom bye-laws have been framed, or customs established, which pay much homage to virtue, and suggest very noble conduct. The profession of arms is full of chivalrous regulations. Physicians do much for the poor who cannot pay them. They are bound to retain no secrets of science for their own personal advantage, but to communicate to the faculty and world whatever they may discover. In a hundred other ways the laws and etiquette of their profession breathe the nicest delicacy. The lawyer recognises various rules of his calling promotive of justice and impartiality. The merchant finds established for him many rules which elevate his conduct in transacting business : these have grown up in the course of time, and cause his dealings to be handsomer and more liberal than men's would be if they had each to commence for themselves, and found in their profession no recognised tradition to which they had to conform. I have no doubt that this might be

traced lower down ; that artizans and labourers recognise among themselves certain rules which tend to keep them honourable, and helpful to each other, and to the poorer, weaker members of their class. Christianity has told more or less on every department of life, and all this helps to educate men, and to make their conduct reputable and honourable. Then, again, family life is, by God's mercy, a wonderful purifier of society. The home tends to make men sober and industrious ; it draws out in them much that is unselfish and generous ; it brings them near those great teachers—pain, sickness, and death ; it schools their tempers by the necessity of self-control, as a condition of domestic happiness. The family is God's special instrument for the cultivation of humanity. The attached husband, the careful parent, the considerate master, may well be thought to have learned something in God's own school ; but let them not mistake the part for the whole, and think they must necessarily have learned all that is required of them to make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Unless they go forward to perfection, unless they work *out*

their salvation, unless they run so as to obtain, they may yet, as the apostle would say, be nothing and nowhere. For it would be foolish to think that these are the only influences telling on men,—that there is no danger of a different and opposite process taking place. In numerous cases men deteriorate as they grow old. Experience of human nature leads many to disbelieve in goodness, to think that all, however apparently virtuous, have their price. Ingratitude and disappointment sour many. Those who were energetic in order to secure themselves a position, relax afterwards and become indolent, and a man who is indolent in worldly matters is not likely to be energetic in spiritual. Sickness makes many fretful, or occupied with their own petty ailments. Wealth, we are told in Scripture, is very dangerous. Though the *theory* of professions is noble, it is obvious that the *practice* of them lowers many, instead of elevating them. The clergyman may become mechanical, the lawyer dishonest, the physician tricky, the schoolmaster vain. The engaging youth becomes the old voluptuary ; the pleasing maiden turns into the scheming mother

or the frivolous dowager. Our course through life is strewn with wrecks : here is one of our companions that has sunk into sensual self-indulgence, there another who has hardened into the driest money-maker. It is much easier to be pleasing and engaging when the health is good, when our position has to be won, when friends have to be made, when healthy exertion is forced upon us, when life is cheerful and full of hope ; easier then than when the acme is past, the time of flowering has been reached, and life is turning off. Then is the time when it can be better seen whether our good qualities have been founded on genuine Christian principles, or have sprung from secondary motives. Only the seed sown in the honest and good heart brings fruit to perfection ; only genuine Christian virtue bears the wear and tear of life. Faith, and faith alone, is the victory that overcomes the world ; others are overcome by it. They start in life with nobler intentions than they realize. They come to do what once they would have denied to be possible. Is thy servant a dog ? they say, when young, to an imputation which a few years later in life is proved too true.

This is the corruption which is in the world^a, and these considerations of the effect which the world is likely to have on men, become more serious when we remember that it would not be sufficient (were it possible) to stand still, to grow neither better nor worse. We may be sure that it is not possible : the very recurrence of Sundays and sermons, of warnings and mercies, of suggestions of conscience and lessons from holy Scripture, hardens men, unless blessed to them. Passive impressions become weaker by repetition ; habits hold men with increasing tenacity unless snapped early ; the natural man is not “corrupt” at once, but in a process of corruption, according to the deceitful lusts ; the seeds of moral death are in men’s *souls* as the seeds of physical death are in their *bodily* frames. The physician does not hope to prevent physical death,—he only aims at deferring it ; but we need not in the same manner resign ourselves to moral death as we do to physical. No ; we believe that sin may be expelled from us, evil cast out of our being, life introduced to the eviction of death. “ Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

A power has come into the world, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians, sufficient to conquer sin, and he who is not availing himself of this opportunity, not bringing himself under these influences, is rejecting the gift of God, and provoking the wrath of his offended Benefactor. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry. "Give me thy heart" is an invitation which cannot be trifled with. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." He has a right to demand holiness when He is ready to supply that which produces it. He exacts no more of us than what we can, by His grace, attain to. Instead of standing still, of being merely as far advanced as children and young people, He expects the adult Christian to have made, and to be making, progress towards perfection. "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

If, then, you see that this ought to be going on in you, instead of the moral decline which too many characters exhibit, delay not, brethren, to give your mind to these subjects. Most men take the matter a great deal too indolently, as if working out their salvation

was a matter which required neither time nor trouble. They have not given a quarter of the thought to it which they have expended in learning a business or an accomplishment. Yet Scripture is full of warnings to us of the difficulties that have to be overcome. When our Lord was asked whether there were few that should be saved, He replied, "Strive to enter in by the strait gate;" the righteous, we are told, shall scarcely be saved; St. Paul speaks of himself as not having already attained.

Every transformed sinner will be a monument of divine mercy, the wonder and admiration of angels. Great are the difficulties that have to be overcome, as those best know who most honestly try: inveterate habits, opposition of companions; the torpor of indolence; the power of self-deceit, which is so wonderful in the human heart; the danger of mistaking the shadow for the reality, mistaking the product of a secondary motive for the genuine Christian grace; yet none that are in earnest need despair. Great as the difficulties may be, God's grace has overcome them in others, and will in us, if we be not wanting to our-

selves. If we will hearken, He will speak with us ; if we will do our part, God in His mercy will take our case in hand. He is taking your case in hand ; this is the meaning of the discipline to which you have been subjected, of the adversities that have befallen you. Suffer Him to interpret to you the providential dealings which have marked your lives, and He will give you to know why you were checked here and thwarted there ; why this did not succeed, and the other unaccountably failed. He would throw you off from the creature to the Creator, from the broken cistern to the fountain of living water ; therefore the world was embittered to you by disappointment, and you were wounded just in your most sensitive point. Hearken to Him, as He would speak to you through the incidents of life, in the suggestions of conscience, by our words in sermons, by the striking events of the day. Believe that He is calling you to honour, glory, and immortality ; to this, certainly, but *through* difficulties,—difficulties from within and from without, difficulties from your own treacherous heart, and from the observations, the censure, and the

criticism of an unsympathizing world. It is the fear of man that keeps many back. They dislike to be talked about and remarked upon ; they would not like it said that they had made a profession of religion, and had taken any step which should stamp them ; they had rather cherish in private better feelings than the world gives them credit for, than avow openly that they are resolved henceforth to set God always before them. But this is but an excuse for cowardice and half-heartedness ; this is not serving God with generous devotion. What should we think of a friend that professed to cherish very warm feelings for us in private, but would not acknowledge us publicly ? This is not the way to escape the corruption that is in the world, the deterioration which affects all the unsanctified. No, brethren, God calls for immediate and decided action. How long halt ye between two opinions ? Deterioration or sanctification,—the choice lies between these two. If you are not being sanctified, you are declining, and cannot insure the continuance of any one good quality in which you now pride yourselves. Your courage, your truth, your uprightness, your

good-temper may, unawares to you, lose their savour, and you become spiritless salt, and be good for nothing ; yes, you may be adjudged at last in God's universe good for nothing ; you, who might have been so noble, so useful, so blessed ; you, whom He called to honour, glory, and immortality,—to a seat on the steps of His throne, to do his work here and reflect His image hereafter. See that ye reject not Him that speaketh.

SERMON XVIII.

FALSE EXORCISTS.

ACTS xix. 15.

"And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

SCARCELY at any place had the Gospel been planted with so many advantages as at Ephesus. St. Paul had commenced the work there, in company with his dear and generous friends, Priscilla and Aquila; the rare talents of Apollos had next been of service; his Alexandrian learning, natural eloquence, attainments in the Scripture, and fervour of spirit, only wanted that higher teaching which he was humble enough to receive from Aquila and his wife, to make him a master builder. In this hopeful state of things St. Paul returned, supplied what was wanting to some of John's disciples who, be-

cause of their distance from Palestine, were yet uninformed of the facts concerning *Him* whom John's teaching had prepared them to welcome, and the gifts of the Spirit began to abound in these new Christians*. St. Paul continued to give them the aid of his invaluable teaching for the unusual space of two years, and great was the impression he produced; men's minds, as many circumstances mark, were generally stirred. It was at this time that the occurrence took place alluded to in the text. The extraordinary miracles which St. Paul was enabled to work—such, that clothes taken from his body, when applied to the sick, relieved them from diseases, and caused evil spirits to go forth from them,—attracted the attention of some who learned nothing from these miracles, but had souls so meanly devoted to money-getting, that they only saw in these marvels an opportunity for increasing their own unlawful gains. These were wandering Jews, often impostors, who professed to cast out evil spirits by exorcisms, charms, and adjurations. It was an age when the heathen, losing faith in their own superstitions,

* Acts xix. 6.

were on all sides seeking to foreign religions for aid, and perhaps many were being led to remark something very singular and mysterious in the Jewish faith. They saw a peculiar people, separated by their usages from the nations among whom they dwelt, worshipping no idols, admitting of no union with other rites, confident, arrogant, exclusive ; and though they saw little to *love* in them, they did not know but that they might be in possession of some traditional secrets or hidden powers. And there were among the Jews low-minded men, who turned this disposition of the heathen to a sordid account, and, instead of feeling themselves called upon, as the possessors of a higher truth, to endeavour to communicate it to the heathen, thought only how they could get money, or power, out of the superstitious feelings of their neighbours. Like the rain-makers of the present day in Africa, they professed to have extraordinary power. Some pretended to it as derived from Solomon, whose name was then, as it is now, great throughout the East for magic ; some trusted to the virtue of particular sacred names, which they used as charms ; the very syllables

of which, when uttered according to a true pronunciation, of which only themselves were masters, they asserted had vast power. Such men were naturally wanderers, changing the scene of their operations ; for it does not answer to those who are very free of their predictions to remain too long in one place, lest they be put to the test and exposed. The cases to which such persons chiefly addressed themselves seem to have been of that class which was then so common—the demoniacs, and all affected with evils of the same kind ; perhaps exorcism had been often *lawfully* practised by pious men among the Jews ; but it is also probable that it was often attempted by those who had no spiritual powers, and were little better than impostors. Some of these, hearing of St. Paul's miracles, and the name of Him by whom he wrought them, conceived that they might themselves bring about the same effect : either they thought it was *all imposture*, and they were as likely to succeed as he, or the power was in the Name he pronounced—the formula,—and then it would be as potent in their mouths as in his. They had not conceived anything else as possible. It had escaped

them that *that* Name might be more than a name,—might represent a living Person, the Lord God Omnipotent; might be no mere charm, the virtue of which depended on its bare repetition, but that the using it might involve an appeal to a Being who might act in what way He should please, and would refuse His aid to any but His own servants; nay, would avenge, as a daring insult, any unauthorized use of His awful Name. All this was hidden from these blind, base men; and they took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the Name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth.” Now there were prominent in doing this the sons of a man named Scæva, men who had greater pretensions than others, on two accounts: first, their father was a high-priest; and next, their number was seven—a sacred and mysterious number. The sin was greater in these men than in others, for, as the sons of a priest, they were prostituting to low, selfish ends very high endowments; they were using with a view to filthy lucre, that which God had given them for the good of others; they were risking more than a common repu-

tation, and, if they failed, bringing disgrace among the heathen on the priesthood of the holy nation. They dared to take the holy Name into their unholy mouths, but the issue was very different from what they had expected. The evil spirit, which they looked, with more than ordinary confidence, to cast out, answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" that is, "I acknowledge that I owe submission to Jesus; *His* power I do tremble at; were *He* indeed to speak, I must obey: and Paul I respect; he has a commission, he can use authority; I should have to comply, were *he* to command: but who are ye? ye have no right to expel me; ye are frail, presuming, ignorant mortals, ye have no power; it is not such we tremble at, we are not wont to crouch before sinners; there is nothing awful about *you*: would ye try our strength? would you make experience of a spirit's power? out on you, ye false ones." And the man in whom the spirit was leaped on them and overcame them, and prevailed against them, though they were seven; so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Such is spiritual might, even when

fallen, such is the weakness and impotence of sinners, such is the certainty of the defeat of those who go to a work to which they are not called, without a commission, and without faith ; for while he who has a right to use the Name of Christ may in that Name chase a thousand demons, yea, may encounter and vanquish their great leader himself ; yet the mere *Name* affords no protection to him who is of another spirit, who uses it only as a form and charm ; rather he exposes himself to signal defeat and great shame, and he shall rue the day that he profaned that great Name, so powerful when spoken by a believer, so dangerous to him that will presume to use it unworthily.

Brethren, there are many things which we shall do well to notice in this history. See the terribleness of the evil one : here one, perhaps nowise a particularly powerful spirit, scatters the might of seven men, and drives them forth naked and wounded. Next, be prepared, when God, of His grace, is accomplishing any movement for good in men's minds, like that at Ephesus, to find others coming forward who have no sympathy with that which is going

on, but who will endeavour to turn it to their own selfish account. Expect an imitation, a parody, and trust God to avenge His own cause, to distinguish between the precious and the vile: God will make use even of pretenders and impostors to advance His cause, even as this occurrence at Ephesus was overruled for good; for "when this was known to all the Jews, and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, fear fell on them all, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified:" and the circumstance told just in the way it should have done—it proved a signal discouragement to all magical arts^b. Observe that the sincerity of their abhorrence of their late pursuits was shewn by the best proof which they could give, viz. by a great pecuniary sacrifice, which their conscience imposed on them. Having magical books to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver, they did not think it right, now that they were giving up the trade themselves, to sell these books to others, but threw them into the fire, as the only proper place for them: "brought their books together, and burned them before all men;"—taking shame

^b Acts xix. 18.

to themselves for the unlawful acts they had so long practised. Well might the sacred historian add, "so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed." It was a sign of the life, the growing, spreading, penetrating life, which there was in the Word, when thus it prevailed over things so hard to overcome as love of money, prejudice, habit, pretended learning, professional feelings, and false shame. When shall we see like sacrifices made on account of principle,—men renouncing disreputable trades, unlawful gains, discreditable business; refusing to sell to others that which their conscience forbids them to keep themselves; confessing their deeds before all men, and making a money sacrifice to conscience? When religion has taken such hold on a man that it brings him to this, we may well say the Word of God is growing mighty, and prevailing in him.

Again, let us beware of an unbelieving use of formulas; let us see that we have a right to use them, before we take them into our mouths; let us not trust to the mere repetition of any words, unless they are the true, natural expressions of our own spirit. We

must have a congenial *spirit*, else the words we use will witness against us. No prayer will avail, merely as so much mere sound, unless it be the meaning of our *heart*; no creed will avail, unless we really believe what we profess; no pious phrases or religious talk will avail, unless it come from our heart. The evil spirit knows and feels the difference between those who really wield the sword of the spirit, and those who approach him with only a make-believe. The sin of the sons of Scæva is not uncommon now. Alas! I fear too many trust to phrases, such as, "we are all sinners;" "justification by faith;" "God is merciful;" and have not caught the spirit of these truths, any more than the sons of Scæva had caught the spirit of St. Paul. Let us never be content with merely picking up a phrase, let us be satisfied with nothing short of possessing the *spirit*, which alone gives life and power to the word. So with all other outward forms; each to a Christian, a believer, has a power; but each may be caught up by one who is a stranger to the spirit. A person may come to church, and have nothing of the spirit which leads naturally to church; no sense of a need

of God, no delight in worship, no reverence, no elevation of mind above things seen ; he comes to church, but there is nothing to make Satan tremble in his coming. So a man may read a Bible, and Satan may securely feel, *that* man is not likely to do me much mischief by anything he will find there ; *he* is reading for amusement, from mere habit, or merely because he has promised some one that he will do so. Therefore, brethren, let us often call ourselves to account, and say, What spirit am I of ? have I got to the heart of the matter ? am I merely taking names in my mouth which I have no right to use, or have I imbibed the spirit which they imply ?

Do not venture to engage the evil one with mere forms : from dread of him, as well as fear of God, refuse to do so ; for neither will Satan respect, nor God bless, a mere *form*. Believe that in every ordinance there is an inward accompanying life, and that it need not be to us a dead form but through our own fault.

Say it is a high, an awful thing, to use that name of Jesus which Paul preached ; my business is to do in reality that which those

sons of Scæva attempted in vain. It is the Christian's duty to be an exorcist, to cast out evil spirits, to cast out evil from his own heart and from the hearts of others. And it is still only the Name of Jesus, that Name above every name, only the cross of Jesus, the Gospel, the power of Jesus, which will avail to expel ; only Jesus, as preached by Paul, in truth, faithfulness, and completeness. Many we shall find trying to cast out evil by using other names ; but nothing will really cast out vice, selfishness, ambition, lust, or corruption, but the Name of Jesus. Some, again, are using this holy and powerful Name, but not as Paul preached it,—not in the integrity of the faith, not in the unity of the Church. Let us, who trust we do preach Jesus, and as Paul preached Him, who do believe that His is the only name of power, let us see to it that we name that Name in a reverent, believing spirit ; not as a charm, a formula, as having any power of itself, but only as representing His power, Who is the living and ever-present Saviour.

Brethren, it is fearful to engage Satan with other weapons, with armour which we have not proved : those men who are now-a-days

endeavouring to cure the evils of society by other names, their end will be the same as was that of the sons of Scæva ; the man in whom is the evil spirit will arise, in his hellish strength, and refuse to acknowledge that they have any commission to subdue him ; he will drive them forth, ashamed and exposed, naked and wounded. Let us not be surprised at the attempt being made, but let us never be seduced into thinking that it will succeed ; let us be sure God will avenge the misuse or neglect of His Name ; He will cause all to redound to the glory of His truth, as He did the exorcisms of the sons of Scæva.

In one other point of view take warning from those miserable men. How sad to belong to the chosen nation, to be sons of a priest, to dwell at Ephesus during the years a Paul preached there, and to have the heart utterly untouched, the conscience unstirred. They could not plead that, in that great city, the movement created by the apostle escaped their notice : they knew of it, but it presented itself to them simply in this point of view, viz. that they had an opportunity of making money by it ; that they could patch up their

damaged reputation by a new expedient. In a world of lies, as they thought it, the Name of Jesus presented itself only as a new instrument of magic. Alas! to what misconceptions is His truth open! To Gallio it appears a question of words and names, to Festus a piece of over-learning, to Pilate only as another fruitless attempt to find truth; to Ananias and Sapphira as an opportunity for getting the credit of liberality without being really liberal; to Simon Magus, as to these sons of Scæva, as an opportunity for bolstering up his reputation as a great magician. Surely, according as men in their hearts *are*, so do they esteem God's truth to *be*. They find in it, or think they find in it, what they wish to see there. “To the froward Thou wilt shew Thyself froward.”

O miserable lot! to know only of that Name at a distance, as a Name of power which *others* use, and to seek to do their deeds by merely catching their tones, and mocking and imitating their notes, instead of knowing it as a Name of power, indeed, but power against sin, against vanity, against covetousness; of power over ourselves, to cast out evil from our own

hearts first, that then, for no selfish ends, we may proceed to cast it out of others. Great as is the difference between a juggling rain-maker and a Christian missionary, between a Simon Magus and a Simon Peter, between the sons of Scæva and Paul,—such is the difference between one who merely names the name of Christ to his own defeat, and disappointment, and discomfiture, and one who has, of God's grace, obtained a right to use it on others, by having first experienced its power in *himself*. Brethren, either Satan must flee before us, naked and wounded, or we before him: there is no name that can subdue him but His, Whom Paul preached at Ephesus; only take care you have a right to use it. “Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Finally, observe that this day you are called upon to be exorcists: as you know Jesus, as you know Paul, cause others to know them; cause, by your contributions, that Gospel which was such a blessing to heathen Ephesus, to be a blessing to other places, alas! too much like Ephesus, where

you will find money-making, and superstition, and imposture, and men shouting out the greatness of their goddess: but the Church is weak, believers few, iniquity abounds, and it needs the doctrine of Christ, in the spirit of an Apostle, to cast out the evil one.

SERMON XIX.

ST. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME.

ACTS xxvii. 23, 24.

“For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”

IT had long been the desire of the great apostle St. Paul to visit Rome. In his Epistle to the Church there he had said, “Whencesoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you; having a great desire, these many years, to come unto you.” At another time he had said, “After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.” In a night of danger the Lord had stood by him and said, “Thou must bear witness also at Rome;” he therefore knew that he should reach Rome, but little did he know under what circumstances he should be brought there; not free to move about, to enter synagogues, and dispute

in public places, but a prisoner, chained by the hand to a Roman soldier. St. Paul and Rome—these two represented the two chief powers, at that day, of the Church and the world. Rome, the head-quarters of an universal monarchy, the one spot where the machinery of the government of the world was regulated; every movement there affecting vast provinces and innumerable tribes; intrigues in its court involving the happiness of millions; the one centre to which turned the heart of each Roman, each of that race which then governed the earth: Rome, the fountain of law, and the head-quarters of the iron discipline of military rule; the eternal city, as it called itself, whose language must be used in all courts of justice, the supreme court of appeal for all cases from all quarters of the civilized world. Its law, its morals, its luxury, its philosophy, its religion, had an influence, and were destined to have an increasing influence, wherever man, savage or civilized, trode. But great as the power of Rome was, that of St. Paul—or say, rather, of Him who used St. Paul as His instrument—was a still greater power. This was he whose name was to be familiar where those of Nero

and his courtiers are unheard ; this was he whose writings were to be translated into a hundred languages, printed in millions of volumes, pored over successively by rich and poor for centuries, and to convey the truths of eternal life to mortal men as long as men shall be mortal. This was he whose preaching was to alter the whole face of things at Rome ; to repress its luxury, humanize its law, destroy its religion, recast its philosophy, and confer on the city an interest and power when it should have ceased to be the home of Cæsars and senates, and the centre of temporal government. This was he whose teaching was to bring emancipation to the slaves of the crowded metropolis, to throw light into its dark dungeons, and to bring hope and peace to many a desolate and disconsolate heart, that now, in its darkness, felt about after a God and Father.

No wonder that, such being the consequences involved in the apostle's visit to Rome, Satan bent all his energies to keep him from reaching it. Many were the obstacles he made use of to hinder the onward march of the Christian champion. It was he that raised the tempestuous wind, and caused them to be

driven up and down in the Adriatic : " Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, so that all hope that they should be saved was taken away." It was he who prompted the dastardly plan of the mariners, who thought to make use of the only boat to escape themselves, and leave soldiers and prisoners to be drowned. No sooner was one danger escaped, but a fresh one arose : first, it was the sailors who nearly ruined all ; next, the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest they should escape, and themselves be held answerable for letting them go. No sooner was the land, after so many perils, reached, but the deadly viper seemed likely to effect that which winds and waves had failed to accomplish. What was it, then, brought the apostle safe through so many hindrances ? it was God's predestinating decree that Rome he should reach, hinder who would. There stood by him at night, when things looked darkest, the angel of God, saying, " Fear not, Paul ; thou must be brought before Cæsar :" and mark how God would bring him there.

Notwithstanding outward hardships, such as chains and a prisoner's treatment at a period

when a voyage was painful under the most favourable circumstances, yet God vouchsafed him inward consolations. He had, even in that crowded ship and coarse company, congenial friends in the Christians who volunteered to accompany him, and who had gone to great expense in order to make their voyage in the same ship which bore this precious freight. Luke, the Evangelist and beloved physician, and Aristarchus the Thessalonian, were at pains to be with him whom they loved and honoured, though the world, that was not worthy of him, kept him in chains, and classed him with malefactors. When "he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all, and brake it," there were some that knew that that action signified more than a mere asking of a blessing on a meal. When he prayed for the lives and the conversion of those that sailed with him, there were those that joined in his prayers. But not only from friends did he receive sympathy, but gradually he won to himself honour and regard from the heathens on board. At first, little noticed, he in vain admonished the authorities to abide in the haven of Crete,

where they were ; for at that time of year (in October) it was thought dangerous to proceed over such a sea as the Mediterranean ; not only on account of storms, but because clouds at that time of year might be expected to obscure the sight of the heavenly bodies, by the aid of which alone they navigated. "Sirs," said he, "I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives :" at that time he was not listened to ; but when hope had left all others, he was able to stand forth in the midst, and announce that there should be no loss of any man's life ; the ship only should be lost, and they be cast on an island. Gradually, as others faltered or gave way to heathen despair, his suggestions gained more and more attention. The centurion, who found little help from others, found much from *him*, whose prediction had never yet been falsified, who was calm and peaceful for himself, and only anxious how to save and help others. The command virtually fell into his hands : at his word the boats' ropes were cut, a regular meal was taken—the first for fourteen days ; and through him a general spirit of vigour and ani-

mation infused into the dejected band. He had the great satisfaction of feeling himself useful to the souls and bodies of men, wherever he might be cast, and however hampered and confined his opportunities might appear to be. Two hundred and seventy-six lives in the ship were granted in answer to his prayers ; on the island, the natives were impressed, cures wrought, souls converted, a church established. His floating dungeon turns into a mission-field. The temporary residence, of three months, at Malta, is long enough to leave permanent effects behind.

So was it with St. Paul, and somewhat so will it be with us, if we live according to his principles. O brethren, let us ask ourselves if we can say, as he did, of God, " Whose I am, and Whom I serve." We are God's, indeed, by creation,—He hath made us, we are the work of His hands ; we are God's by redemption,—He hath purchased us with the blood of His Son ; His by baptism : but are we also His by dedication of ourselves to Him, by covenant with Him ? is He accepting us, owning us, marking us as His own, taking possession of us by His Spirit ? Are we in the

habit of crying, "I am Thine; O save me?" Blessed is he who feels, and has a right to feel, that he is God's; that he cannot be overlooked, cannot be lost; that all things are being ordered for his advantage; that he is not left out of sight in any of the dispositions of events which his heavenly Father makes. When the apostle claimed to belong to God, saying, "Whose I am," he felt, that amid those seething waves of the trackless sea, he could not sink as a stone in the mighty waters, and be lost to the light of day, without being still in his Father's hand, and under that Father's care. This is the talisman to carry a man through danger, scaling heights in the cannon's mouth, or battling with the angry waves in an open boat,—"I am thine; O save me." The apostle added, the better to explain himself to the heathen whom he addressed, "Whom I serve," Whom you may have remarked me paying my devotions to. I have not addressed your Jupiter; I have vowed no offerings at the shrines which you frequent; I have revered no amulet or image, but the God that made the sea and the dry land, Him I serve, Him I worship and address myself to,

and He has heard my prayers. O brethren, were two or three of us the only Christians amidst a company of heathen in the like circumstances, should we be able to speak with the same confidence, that this God was our God ? would our behaviour have been as marked, our devotion as notorious, as was His ? Chained to a Roman soldier, he had found means to pay his devotions : how many, who have no difficulties to contend with, neglect theirs ! Those that are God's, whom He has accepted, who do habitually, and spite of difficulties, worship Him—to them He generally vouchsafes in the hour of their need, some intimation of His favour and protection, such as this : “Fear not, Paul.” To him it was the appearance of an angel, something definite and intelligible to the rude heathen to whom he reported it ; but many others have had substantially the same comfort conveyed to them in a less sensible way. There is one time when we shall all need it—when the waves, not of a literal sea, but of the dark river of death, shall be gaining around us : what happiness then, if we shall be able to say of Him, “ Whose I am, and Whom I serve ;” and if His angel, seen

or unseen, whisper to us by name, and say,
“Fear not.”

“Thou must be brought before Cæsar:” once it had seemed very terrible to stand face to face with the tyrant, but now, in the presence of death by the surging waves, and the prospect of work interrupted and plans unexecuted, the assurance of being tried by Cæsar was even a comfort. So is it often with what we dread; however terrible in itself, it may come to be desirable in comparison with something still more formidable.

There is for each of us a predetermined goal, some Rome that we must reach, some Cæsar that we must stand before, and till our day come we cannot perish: whatever be the obstacles in the way, He will bring us to our destined point; the thickest shower of bullets cannot touch a hair of those whose day has not arrived to fall. What the goal may be for us, we may not know as clearly as St. Paul knew his; but it only concerns us to know that it is to be reached by the path of duty, and up that path to press to it, spite of all hindrances; endeavouring to shew cheerfulness, courage, power of adapting ourselves

to various circumstances, activity, and humility, such as he shewed. How great is the effect of real Christian character, of deep religious principle! it is constantly telling where you might least expect to find it of use; and on the other hand, the most gifted men are continually failing for the want of it. Who would have thought, beforehand, that St. Paul's piety would have made him useful in a shipwreck? and yet we see that, besides the supernatural benefits obtained by his prayers, merely in a worldly point of view, his courage, cheerfulness, decision, energy, and willingness to make himself of use in the humblest work—such as gathering sticks for a fire,—were all of inestimable use, in a way that the least religious could appreciate: and so we find now, that there is no situation of life where true religion does not tell, and make a man useful. If he is in command, it tends to make those under him moral; it brings him out of difficulties which would disgrace men who had less character; it enables him to bear shocks which would unman others: in war it makes him gentle and considerate; in a pestilence, unselfish; in a storm, collected. On the other hand, we are

daily seeing men, who lack the one thing needful, break down, though they started with many advantages. Their want of real religion, sooner or later, tells even in the conduct of affairs of this life: some bribe proves too tempting to them, or their tempers remain unsubdued, and men cannot act with them; or a want of devotion in themselves leads to immorality in their children or servants, which exposes them to shame. Without real piety, the most splendid talents are often very dangerous to their possessors and their employers; but with real piety, very humble abilities prove often very serviceable. A man of piety, though he be dull and slow, yet has his value to his employers, speaking now merely in a worldly point of view. Steadiness, and truth, and justice, and kindness have even a marketable value. In the most hot battle, in the wildest storm, it is a great thing to know that you have a man by you who fears God more than death, and loves his Saviour more than his life. No profession could afford to dispense with its religious members, even though they might not be the most brilliant. Let us seek to have grace in us, to become truly God's, such as He

will own and dwell in, and then no fear but we shall be useful, wherever we may be cast. Nothing comes amiss to him who is ready for everything, because he is living on God, to God, in God ; ready for life, ready for death. Let us not care too much for a smooth passage on the voyage of life, for unimpeded enjoyments, or power to select our associates and choose our own course ; for if He please to restrict us as much as He restricted His apostle, and give us associates as repulsive as a Roman soldier for ever chained to us, storms as wild as Euroclydon ever raised, enjoyments as scanty as a prisoner's cooped up for months in one of the ships of those days, yet He can give us withal such alleviations and refreshments as He indulged this saint with ; and they will be no mean provision : such comforts, I mean, as a few congenial friends, devoted to the same great objects ; men whose affection will stand the test of some hardships, who will place themselves in the same boat with us when it is no longer for a summer excursion, but for a winter passage ; who will accompany us though our name be no longer honoured, and our destination be to stand before a Nero. Happy

the man to whom God has given friends who will think it a privilege worth purchasing to share his misfortunes. This is one good gift we may beseech Him to grant us for the stormy voyage of life. Then we may also pray Him that He will give us grace to rise *with* circumstances, *to* our circumstances; to have a power of adapting ourselves, with a happy versatility, like the apostle, who at one time disputes with philosophers, and then makes tents for his living; now terrifies a hasty magistrate by the assertion of his rights, and then stoops to conciliate the prejudices of his countrymen; who is at home in the language of the camp and the rough work of a voyage; now addresses kings with tact and politeness, and then brings the Gospel home to the poorest slave; who now claims all things as his in Christ, and then thinks it not derogatory to speak of his cloak and his parchments. Verily, he became all things to all men, if by any means he might save some.

And many, doubtless, he was the means of saving: we may believe that out of those two hundred and seventy-six who owed their lives to his prayers, some came to owe their souls,

their own selves also ; that Julius the centurion's courteousness ripened into something more ; that some soldiers learned the secret of that courage which they could not help admiring ; that some of the prisoners were taught what made the apostle's bonds no torment ; that some learnt how to stand before Him who is more formidable than Cæsar ; that some of those rude islanders learnt, that though he was not a god himself, yet that he was the messenger of One ; and that when that company parted, some to trade at Rome, some to rise in their profession as soldiers, some to die in torture, they carried that with them which causes them, at this day, to bless God that He cast their lot in the ship of Alexandria that was wrecked on the coast of Malta.

SERMON XX.

COMPLETENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

PHILIPP. iv. 8, 9.

“ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

THESE words are interesting as completing a little whole in themselves: in them the apostle gathered up all he wanted to say; they satisfied his mind as describing the totality of the Christian character. He made them few and short, that they might be the more easily remembered; he wrote them as one who, from his chains at Rome, could not say much, who knew not that he might have the power of again addressing them, and would say all in a few words: “ Finally, my bre-

thren ;" with such an introduction he beseeches their affectionate attention.

He was writing to a Church more advanced in grace than some others, stained with fewer faults, and bound to himself by closer personal ties than any other. He had seen them in the flesh, as he had not seen *all* to whom he wrote ; he had himself planted the Gospel among them ; he had planted it at the cost, to himself, of suffering, for the gaol at Philippi had been his reward. It was the first place in Europe where he had been allowed to plant the Gospel, and this under the direction of the Holy Ghost, from Whose special provision and ordering of all the attendant circumstances, he might draw some augury of the importance of that step which first brought the Gospel to our continent. There first had he encountered minds similar to his own,—for St. Paul was essentially European in the construction of his mind, and by education ; there had he first had the satisfaction of seeing the wonderful adaptation of the Gospel to the wants of the highest class of minds. From this Church, so interesting to him, he had been able safely and comfortably to receive pecuniary assistance,

as he could not from many ; “ Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no Church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.”

This Church, which was planted in a neighbourhood familiar with Greek philosophy, amidst seekers of wisdom and professors of virtue, among men of enquiring minds, feeling about after truth, who had on many points a high tone of morality; this Church he cautions, in the words of the text, not to think themselves excused from attention to moral virtue, because they had found in the Gospel that which none of the schools and philosophers of Greece could teach. There was danger lest, in the fulness of their delight at the new and complete discoveries made to them, they should blindly despise the portion of truth which their heathen neighbours were possessed of; and whilst the apostle, above all men, was keenly aware of the miserable insufficiency of the Gentile teaching, knew that it had not guided men to God, nor shewn the means of cancelling past sin, nor taught a consistent mo-

• Philipp. iv. 15.

rality, nor given men the power to act up to their convictions, yet he was anxious to teach the Philippians that they were to make their own, and take possession of in the Name of Christ, all that was good in the world's philosophy ; and that they were to be watchful, lest with their higher knowledge they should sink down into a lower practice than the heathen among whom they dwelt. And we, brethren, in our day, are not altogether without need of the like exhortation : we are surrounded, not by a rival heathen philosophy, but by a worldly morality, the code of men of this world and of their teachers, which is high on some points, and towards which we have the same duties as the early Christians had toward the worldly system of their days.

The teaching of men of this world is still miserably deficient ; it excuses some sins, it is too much without God, it knows nothing of cancelling past sin, it supplies very insufficient motives ; but yet it is high on some points, and we have need to be exhorted, as those of old, to make our own what is good in it, and to see that we fall not in any point below the standard of men of honour.

Surely, among men of this world, there is much high profession which we shall do well to consider. "Think on these things," saith the apostle. Do you hear them approve self-sacrifice? do you hear them treat a lie as the foulest crime, and the imputation of a lie as the gravest charge? do you find them scorn cowardice? is it their rule to protect the weak, not to trample on the fallen? do they condemn meanness in money-matters, and niggardliness, and hard bargaining, and grinding of the poor? do they scout hypocrisy, and insincerity, and profession of more than is felt? do they condemn bye-views to self-interest, and the sacrifice of the affections to merely worldly considerations? do they assert that religion ought not to be a mere calculation for safety, on prudential grounds, to escape hell-fire, but a love of goodness for its own sake, independent of any reward? Then, whenever you hear or meet with such statements, remember this word of the apostle's; be sure that whatever is generous, and noble, and high-minded belongs to Christianity, is the natural possession of the Christian, has been only borrowed by the world from the Gospel, and is

due to Christian influence, however unseen. Be not at once offended and repelled, because these sentiments come from men who are themselves inconsistent, who shew that they act on worldly principles, who are anxious to pick holes in the character of Christians, or who are affecting a pitch of morality above that of the Gospel; be sure that their truths are yours. He hath said, "All are yours;" be sure that no morality, that is true, can really be above that of the Gospel, and be thankful to them if, even from malice, they expose your faults. Endeavour to fill up the compass of Christian practice, to exhibit something of the largeness, the breadth, the completeness of the Christian character, instead of giving occasion that it should be said that religious people are narrower, more timid, more illiberal, less sensitive, or less high-minded, than men of the world. Say, whatever is right, and comes from God, I must appropriate it; it will not rob me of the truths I already profess, it will rather support and complete them; it will not be really found contradictory to what I now value, but only to my perversions, and misapprehensions, and misinterpretations.

First and foremost, cultivate “whatsoever things are true ;” i.e. are truthful, all sincerity, frankness, and straightforwardness, all honesty of mind and accuracy of speech ; abhor hypocrisy, equivocation, and disingenuousness ; beware of exaggeration ; shrink not only from downright falsehoods, but from lies misnamed “white ;” refuse to tell an untruth even to save a friend, or to preserve your own character.

And next, say, whatsoever is honourable or venerable^b, I will venerate ; none shall say that veneration is not part of the Christian character, none shall justly accuse me of presumption, of rashness, of love of novelty, and contempt for established usages and venerable customs, for ancient forms and old prescription. I will shew that none are so truly reverential as they who see God in everything, who look on Him as ruling in the institutions of men, ordaining and maintaining them ; who see His attribute of eternity in all that partakes of permanence, and His authority in all that rules.

And yet this command to honour what is venerable is one that Christians often transgress ; they rudely assault things that appear

^b “ Honest,” i.e. honourable or venerable.

to them superstitions, but in which they might find a good meaning ; they pay no respect to what appear to them *prejudices*, but which are often nearly allied to *principles*. They will admit of ridicule as a weapon in matters from which it should be excluded : e.g., in seeking to convert heathens they will begin by shocking all their established notions, and so destroying the materials out of which belief has to be constructed ; or, again, they are not more remarkable than other men for respect to the aged, for deference to authority, for moderation of language, and reverence for excellence.

Brethren, let us proceed with examining ourselves on each of the points that follow, and see to it that, on each, our conduct be as high as a Christian's should be. " Whatsoever things are just :"—let us guard against all inducements to injustice, all referring things to *partial* friends, who merely take *our* view, and support us in our before-formed opinion ; let us guard against the blindness, which looks only on a few relations of life, and confines the demands of justice to money transactions, instead of opening our eyes to many claims on us, which, though not contained in

written contracts, are yet of force ; such as the claims of old and faithful servants for recompence, of old and deserving poor for maintenance, of government for our just share of public burthens,—the claims of those we have injured for reparation, of those we have offended for explanation. In this way let us think on “ whatsoever things are just.”

And so with regard to “ whatsoever things are pure,”—all things concerned with delicacy, spotlessness, and purity, which even the world admits to be woman’s honour, and ought to be considered man’s ; not going near the confines of temptation, not admitting of equivocal expressions, not deliberating, not parleying, not dallying with evil, not taking pleasure in doubtful books and lax persons ; but with promptitude and jealousy, and watchfulness and decision, and sobriety and self-restraint, endeavouring after this grace ; considering ourselves to be, as Christians, the natural guardians of purity ; fostering it in others, protecting and cherishing it, knowing how eminently Christian this grace is, how dear to God, how important to the character, how connected with strength of will and quickness of conscience, and tenderness of feeling and courage.

Again let us think on “ whatsoever things are lovely” and amiable :—never allowing it for a moment to be supposed that a profession of religion is to excuse violence, or crossness of temper, or rudeness, or coarseness ; but rather maintaining that one who is really penetrated through by Christian principle, really imbued with grace, will outshine and outdo all the amiable men of the world ; will be considerate of other people’s feelings, guarded in his language, careful not to put forth his strength offensively, or make his opinions more unpalatable than is necessary ; will be courteous, accommodating, condescending without making others feel he is so, unselfish in little things, bearing to be put out, patient of interruptions, tolerant of the uninteresting, gentle with the dull, yielding, mild ; not careful to exercise the whole of his authority, willing to follow rather than lead, if it is not wrong to do so : nay, more than amiable the apostle would have us be, for he bids us also follow “ whatsoever things are of good report ;”—to have a care for public opinion, to recognise as worthy of respect the general feeling of the world, to defer, where we may safely do so, to the com-

mon instinct of approbation, not unnecessarily to go counter to it, not to step out of our province, not violate natural modesty, not put ourselves in forced positions ; he would have us provide things honest in the sight of all men, to follow those instincts and precedents which direct us in the details of behaviour, even when we can give no account of them.

And as if, after all this wide sweep round the compass of Christian duty, he might have omitted to press some point of importance, he concludes,—whatever virtue and whatever praise there is, think on these things.

But the apostle could go on to do that which is so useful in a teacher ; he could point to his own conduct as realizing, in actual practice, no imperfect measure of the graces he was contemplating. “ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do : and the God of peace shall be with you.” In these words he would connect moral theory with Christian practice ; he would throw a bridge between the morals of the schools and the higher style of conduct of the apostolic Christian. What ye have learned by instruction from me in the way of

doctrine, what ye have received in the way of rite and practice, what ye have heard of me from others, what ye have seen with your own eyes, do. Happy teacher, that he could put this charge in such close connexion with that which had gone before, and feel no painful contrariety between the two. Brethren, let us all endeavour so to live that we, too, may teach thus ; that we may say to those committed to us—teachers to pupils, parents to children,—Those things which ye have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do. It is thus that Christian *instruction* was meant to be, for ever, enforced and completed by Christian *example* ; and, indeed, it is necessary it should be so : with every desire to particularize, the apostle could not fully do so, and when he had exhausted all terms to express virtue, he was obliged to refer to living example as supplying what would otherwise be wanting ; many details that no words can comprehend, the *manner* of doing things, tones and gestures, carriage and habits, which supply the little touches that bring out the perfect likeness of the Christian lineaments. And the blessed result of the whole will be, he assures

them, if this they do, The God of peace shall be with them. I cannot, he means, be with you as I could wish : God is my record how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ ; but what I shall choose I wot not, for I am in a strait betwixt two : it may be I shall be offered up, and not abide and continue with you ; but the God of peace, He shall be with you. Yea, He shall be present as the God of peace ; amidst outward troubles ye shall have peace,—peace with God, a sense of reconciliation, a joy in your position as redeemed men ; and peace with each other, the sure result of the completeness of the Christian character, to which I have been exhorting you. And, brethren, let us, too, in this place ask the Lord our God for the same blessing ; that He may be with us, and in this character as the God of peace, giving peace to the conscience, preserving unity and concord, suppressing the elements of division, checking the first appearance of disunion. Let us remember, if indeed we covet this as one of God's best gifts, we must labour after it, as the apostle suggests, by a diligent cultivation of all graces, by a careful cherishing of any good

lessons we have received, by taking diligent heed to what we have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in good men. This if we do, labouring to be found of God's grace in the integrity of the Christian faith, and in the completeness of Christian conduct, endeavouring after high-minded practice, and unworldly sentiments, and pure feeling, and generous construction, impartial justice, and strict truth; reverencing all that is truly venerable, and cherishing all that is of really good report; not only thinking on these things, but, as the apostle adds, doing them,—the God of peace will be with us, as He was with them of old; and will grant us to stand fast as dearly beloved and longed for, the joy and crown of our teachers; we shall be of the same mind in the Lord, however we may differ on worldly matters or unimportant points; and God will supply all our need, according to His riches in glory, by Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXI.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

ACTS xxiv. 16.

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

WE find St. Paul many times speaking of himself in such a way as this, e. g., "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day;" "my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;" "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience;" "I know nothing *by*, i. e. against, myself;" and in his very last Epistle, "I thank God, whom I serve from my fore-fathers with pure conscience:" from all which we may gather that this way of speaking was *habitual* to him, that he took *pains* in this matter, that it afforded him much *joy*, and

that he had attained such a state as to have a *pure* conscience. Let us, with God's help, give some consideration to this subject, which certainly occupied a great deal of the apostle's attention.

It is a matter on which nearly every one has some thoughts. Many are accustomed to consider themselves what are called conscientious persons; others, perhaps, will at once admit that they are not able, from circumstances, to act up to the rule of conscience; for themselves, they do not pretend to do so, and they suspect that much fewer people really do, than appear: some believe that there is very little, after all, in the talk about conscience, and that most men are governed by their interest; others are aware, on the contrary, that it is all most real, for they are miserable because they do not obey, because they see what is right and do not pursue it: some have a weak and unenlightened, some a scrupulous and doubting, conscience; some know its *tortures*, some its *peace*; to all it is nearly the most important subject that can come before them, for somehow or other, though a man may find it hard to ex-

plain himself, he feels that this is a matter that touches the very life of his soul; a matter in which he must be concerned alone and by himself,—*the* matter between God and his soul decisive of eternity.

It is of the very essence of an act of conscience that it reminds a man of himself. He has done something, it is wrong, it belongs to none but himself; he is pained, but it is a pain that can be compared with no other; it is of a different sort,—no amount of bodily pain can be reckoned equal to it, it is altogether peculiar. The thing might have been avoided, but now that it is done it remains; it belongs to that in him which is indestructible, he cannot shake it off or lay it down. He may for a time forget, but he cannot ensure himself against the recurrence of his anguish; indeed, something within him prophesies to him that it assuredly will meet him again. And this weight on his conscience is the cause of fresh evil actions, for it makes a man restless and reckless, less able to love; there is something now that he would fain forget and escape from, by losing himself in outward things.

Such, and infinitely worse, was the state of most men's consciences when on those sitting in the shadow of death the light shone, and the Gospel came, appealing to the conscience, commanding itself to it, calling it out into distinctness, reconciling its disjointed utterances, asserting for it a supremacy, endowing it with tenfold awfulness, and making it no more merely a law and a witness to condemn, but a guide, a ruler, a solace, and an exceeding great reward.

Surely now, for Christians, something better is possible than for unrenewed men. In Christians the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling, enlightening conscience, and giving power to the restored nature to obey its suggestions; and so good men know, by a sort of instinct, what is right to be done on each occasion, shrink sensitively from evil, and, with a holy abhorrence and righteous indignation, are affected with disgust at sin. This is meant by such expressions in holy Scripture as, "They hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;" "The sheep know His voice;" "I will write My laws in their hearts;" and so it comes to pass that simple and un-

learned men are guided by this unerring monitor, and are preserved from error and deception, and discern the thin line of duty in perplexing entanglements, and escape the snares of heretics, and disaffect error, they know not why, and have a warning against deceivers, and act with a wisdom of which their understanding can give no account, informed and guided by One above themselves. What a delicate and sacred thing is a Christian's conscience! The whisper, the still small voice that speaks there, is the gentle breathing of the tender Spirit of God most High—the voice of God, and yet most truly the voice of the man's own spirit. Who shall describe its peace when it is cleansed of past sins, and sees that, through God's mercy in Christ, they no longer belong to it, and the man knows he is of the truth, and assures his heart before God, and because his heart condemns him not, has confidence toward God. Yea, and who shall say to what this tends, what conscience shall hereafter be in the glorified man, or rather what shall take its place in the world to come.

But, my brethren, as a Christian's con-

science may be lifted up till it be thus elevated and glorified, so may it first be degraded and then avenge its degradation. It is only to neglect its intimations, and they are checked and stinted, and a man darkens the light within him and knows not where he is going. Often we see a man with a most melancholy ignorance of what right conduct is. His way seems good in his own eyes, when a stranger can at once detect its faultiness. He persuades himself that he should not forgive an injury, when it is as clear as the sun in heaven that it is his duty to do so. He has got to believe it his duty to spend so much on himself, that his charities are scanty. He has adopted a way of justifying himself, in neglecting some obvious duties, (such as coming to the Lord's Supper, resorting to church on week-days,) by arguments, the weakness of which, if applied to earthly matters, he would be the first to see. This darkness is also an ever-increasing darkness. Surely it is notorious that a man sins with less difficulty the second time than the first: at first shame withholds him, and a voice sounds in his ear, and a friendly hand plucks

him back ; but gradually the grieved Spirit retires, and the talent is “taken away from him who hath not ;” and so Scripture speaks of the very mind and conscience being defiled, of the conscience being seared with a red-hot iron, of those who did not like to retain God in their knowledge being given over to a reprobate mind, so that men may come to have well-nigh no conscience, to sin without inward resistance and remonstrance, and not to be aware when they have sinned.

But though suppressed for a time, though withdrawn as a monitor, yet this awful power sleeps only to be awakened. The worst of men, who has come not to know good from evil, and is visited with no prickings, and disbelieves in a God, has not killed his conscience,—he has only laid it to sleep for a time. Sometimes it is awakened even in this life, and the guilt of an action is seen to be, as it really is, as fresh as the day it was done ; the sin looks in upon the soul from every quarter, is repeated by every wind, and meets the man in every countenance ; it is written on everything he takes up, and seems multiplied on purpose to

haunt him. No sinner is safe from these visitings : thus the anguish of Joseph continued to haunt his brethren ; thus was Saul beset in the gloomy evening of his days ; this drove Judas to hang himself. Who knows the volcano that sleeps under every human heart ? the calmest, the sweetest, the gayest is capable of these terrors. Brethren, this is not the scourge of great crimes alone, this will be the lot of every unrepentant sinner, of every condemned soul ; this is the worm that dieth not, this is the unutterable self-reproach, the gnawing remorse that shall prey on many a soul that has never been defiled by what the world reckons deep stains, but shall yet remember, in the agony of despair, that it once had a choice, and chose against God.

I have set before you the two ultimate states ; to one or other of these issues are we all advancing : either to the renewed conscience, ever more clear in its directions, more sweet in its peace, or to the conscience first stifled, and then avenging ; awful when it is silenced, and awful when it awakes.

Now seeing that these capacities for good

and evil lie folded up within us, surely we should use all diligence in seeking to have a good conscience.

Let us pray first for a *cleansed* conscience, that they whose consciences by sin are accused, by His merciful pardon may be absolved. There can be no hope unless restoration begin here, i. e. unless there is a power to cancel what is past, and to forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid. Surely, they may remain for our humiliation, and for our warning—may still be sorrowed over with self-loathing and abasement, and yet not remain for condemnation,—we not doubting of their true forgiveness. Alas ! men think these things incompatible : those that believe, through God's mercy, in the forgiveness of their past sins, are too often wont to forget them, instead of bringing them again and again to the foot of the cross, that the sight of them may inflame their gratitude, subdue their pride, and strengthen their resolution ; and others walk the world with a dull sense of pain, arising from an unloaded heart and a stuffed conscience, and dare not love God, thinking that, till they have forgotten

their sin it cannot be forgiven. If it were so, brethren, it could never be forgiven ; but it is not so, rather "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

And having a *cleansed*, let us seek to keep a *pure*, conscience, not allowing ourselves in any known or wilful sin, endeavouring to act up to the light which we have, and to carry out our convictions ; not trying to tamper with conscience, and to get over an inconvenient scruple, half regretting that the objection has occurred to us, and that we cannot do as others do, and so complying tardily and unwillingly : this is to tempt God to withdraw His light.

Let us pray, too, for a *tender* conscience, quick and sensitive. *This* is the reward of those who keep their conscience pure, viz. that their heart smites them for admixtures of sin in their motives, which coarser measures could not detect. When they are betrayed by force of temptation, they do not continue in sin and grow hardened, but a slight check recalls them.

And let us remember that a tender con-

science need not be a weak and over-scrupulous one, perplexing and tormenting itself. An *enlightened* conscience is one of God's best gifts,—healthy for its possessor, and a fountain of health to others; and this our good Lord will not refuse to those that ask Him.

Having thus seen what a good conscience is, let us pray for one; and let us also, as St. Paul declares to have been his practice, *exercise* ourselves to have such a conscience.

1st. Let us make a conscience of *all* things: thus we find the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saying, “we trust we have a good conscience, in *all* things willing to live honestly.” Let us be on our guard against the custom, too common among men, of having some reserved province or department into which they do not suffer their conscience to intrude. One man is most strict in his views of the purity of family life, but does not carry his conscience into his office or shop. Another has never made a conscience of his talk; another has never submitted the disposition of his time or his money to rule. Now a truly conscientious person is one who acts on principle

in little things, and in all things. He is not a flatterer, not loose in respect of truth, not a dealer in personal gossip, not hasty, but thoughtful, true, earnest and candid. He is one you can depend upon: though his own interest be concerned, though favour and affection, though fear of man stand in the way, though a multitude do evil, yet he is fixed. How different would society be, if it were conducted on the Apostle's principle,—“not only for fear, but also for conscience sake;” if, for instance, the servant gave his services, if the master his recompense, not only for mutual convenience but also for conscience sake.

2. If we would thus be indeed conscientious, we must often discuss and examine our conscience, lest in the hurry of business, in the excitement of pleasure, in the whirl of the crowd, we have admitted aught that may wound us in our most vital part. It is important to call ourselves *at once* to account, for otherwise that measure by which we are to try all other things, becomes itself warped. When a man has once acted, reasons soon supply themselves to justify his procedure,

and unless the fault be at once condemned, it is likely to establish itself and become a precedent. Many are the opportunities afforded us for this self-examination: for instance, every time that we hear the ten Commandments read, every time we are bidden to prepare for the Holy Communion; nay, brethren, should we not, day by day, sift, and search, and "judge ourselves, that we be not judged?"

3. Next, in matters of practice, it is a well-known observation that first thoughts are best; that commonly it is not so hard to know what is right, even in difficult cases, as we are apt to allege; that though, as soon as we calculate and balance, we get confused, yet the suggestion which at first occurred to us was, after all, the right one, and a sufficient guide. Alas! many are the valuable hints which we turn to no account: it occurs to us to say some word, to witness for some truth, to help some one in distress, to put ourselves to some inconvenience, and, whilst we are attending to second thoughts, the opportunity is lost, and not only is the good at the time past by, but may be an inward principle of value is im-

paired, and the suggestion which we have neglected to-day will not be offered to-morrow.

4. Again, let us remember that we must follow our conscience even though it be misinformed: it *ought* not to be so, it need not be so, we are blameable for its being so; but, whatever it is, it must be obeyed. Its commands are sacred. Better is he who does wrong because his conscience impels him, than he who is accidentally right and has gone against the inward voice. Whoso doubteth is condemned if he eat. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

5. Let us respect this high and awful gift in others, remembering the watchful delicacy and self-sacrificing deference which St. Paul prescribed to the Corinthians one toward another, remembering that he who has injured his brother in this matter has inflicted a more grievous amount of injury than any inroad on his health or property can equal. The *man* in each is worth more than his belongings, and he who has led another to go contrary to his conscience has committed a moral murder. Hence the evil of persecution. Rather let us

seek to be the educer and educator, the guide and guardian of the conscience, one for another, bearing anything from another if it results from conscience—any opposition to ourselves, any thwarting, any misunderstanding; preferring to be opposed by earnest men rather than supported by lax ones.

Thus doing, may we, of God's mercy, be allowed to know something of the *testimony* of a good conscience; and this is far different from self-satisfaction and gratulation, very consistent with saying that we are unprofitable servants, yea, with confessing shortcomings and sins. St. Paul knew nothing against himself, yet I suppose he meant not to affirm that he was never betrayed, never overcome, never off his guard, but that there was no grace after which he did not strain, no evil that he tolerated, no duty that he shrank from, no indulgence that he winked at, no reserved corner of his heart which he refused to allow the good physician to probe. And when he could say this he could rejoice, not with the self-satisfaction of one who thinks he has cleansed his own heart, and that he has need of nothing, but as one who felt, "By the grace

of God I am what I am ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Brethren, what man has attained to man may again attain : if this has been the experience of saints, why may it not be ours ? if they could thus wash their hands in innocency, why may not we ? The fountain is still open for sin and for uncleanness, the blood to atone and the water to cleanse. He who endowed us with this awful and wonderful gift is ready to be the Healer and the Guide of our consciences, to speak the word of peace and keep the watch over our hearts. Let us communicate to Him our needs and our difficulties, as to a most loving and tender, wise and discreet friend. Let us confess to Him what we can lay bare to none other. Let us put ourselves under His blessed direction ; referring to Him day by day the spiritual state of our souls, bringing ourselves to definite confessions of separate acts of sin with shame and abasement, attending meekly to that which, in His providence, He imposes as suitable corrections for our particular case, and daily entreating a larger portion of His Spirit, that He may dwell in us more inwardly

and closely, more truly and more secretly, He who is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the Spirit of God's holy fear.

SERMON, XXII.

LEAVEN.

MATTHEW xiii. 33.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

OUR Lord, to set forth the *power* of His kingdom, has called our attention to the change wrought by leaven. In those hot countries, a little sour dough, which had itself fermented, was introduced into a large mass, and hidden in it, where by degrees it wrought unseen, raising the whole, pervading it, so that, after a time, it would be found to have taken effect on every part, and produced a warm fermentation, which rendered the bread more light, wholesome, and palatable.

Something like this we may see in the effect produced when a *principle* is admitted into a single mind, or into the mind of a body corporate, into legislation, or into business ; it may

be small when introduced, it may remain unnoticed, but there is often a *power* in it which causes it to tell, with ever-increasing influence. Good and bad are both thus propagated : bad principles and bad men work like leaven ; good principles and good men work like leaven ; leaven is often used in holy Scripture as the symbol of what is injurious, corrupting, puffing up : “ Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees ; ” “ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” For men are so constituted that they tend to be consistent ; their doing *one* thing leads to their doing another, their acting in a certain way to-day leads to their acting so again to-morrow. One action becomes a precedent, an argument, with themselves and others, that they should continue as they have begun : this arises from the power of habit, and from men’s social feelings. It is for this reason that all wise men have taught that we should resist the beginnings of evil ; oppose the first instance of corruption ; watch well before we commit ourselves ; take care what friends we adopt ; look narrowly at a sentiment, an opinion, a doctrine, before we sanction it to ourselves as a truth.

How difficult (next to impossible) to remove a thing when it has, like the leaven, got possession of our minds—to recover ourselves from prejudices which are woven into the whole staple of our being. It is because man is this impressible being, that it is so important who makes the first lodgment in his mind: hence the unspeakable importance of education; hence the prudence, too, of frequent self-examination, to see whether we may not have admitted some new principles that will work like leaven in us; hence the need of search whether, from some book or friend, we may not have picked up what will go on to affect our whole being. It is no reason for neglecting anything, that it is small; leaven is small. Often the minds which influence society are not many, but a few forcible ones. So is it in a school, or any other assembly. Beware of leaven. Observe, too, that the influences which are working may be long out of sight. Often there are great changes going on in men's minds, which do not reveal themselves at once. Bodies of men may be growing worse or better; society itself may be very materially altered, before any out-

ward manifestations are seen ; it is being leavened.

Now, as this is the state of human nature, as it lies so ready to be influenced, what a comfort it is to think that we are not left to the action of only evil influences, but that our Lord describes the operations of His grace and kingdom, yea, of Himself, as like leaven. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven. If we will bring ourselves within His power, submit ourselves to Him, *He* will preoccupy, affect, pervade our whole being.

The true leaven is His own human nature, which He took and hid in the mass of our humanity, that it might renew the whole. He is Himself the leaven. Small, humble, and overlooked, He grew up in Galilee ; His own received Him not, and the heathen world heard not of Him. He was born, and they marked not the year ; He died, and it is not written in their histories. His disciples were long an obscure sect, for some time without a name, confounded with the Jews ; gaining converts chiefly from the poor, gathering together by night in ignoble receptacles, lost among the millions of Rome ; so insignificant, that it had

been no wonder if they had despaired of ever making themselves felt. Yet because He was with them, by His Spirit, was there *power* with them ; and the doctrine spread, the infection, the madness, as the world deemed it, was communicated,—from five hundred they became three thousand, from three thousand they became five thousand ; priests became obedient, persecutors changed sides. No opinions, no station seemed to ensure men against the new influence : it won women, it had attraction for slaves ; philosophers joined it, counsellors and great men did it homage ; it acted on Jew and Greek, barbarian and refined ; it wrought beneath the surface of society ; without men being aware of it, it affected them ; a higher morality was professed even by those who had, perhaps, never heard of Christ ; till at last men could no longer affect to be ignorant of it, the time went by when it could be safely treated with contempt ; something, it was seen, must be done, or there was no saying where it would stop. Persecution was tried, but it only increased it ; imitations of it were set up, but they did not satisfy the desire which was more and more felt for it, in all its

genuineness, till at length whole legions professed it, cities were pervaded by it, claimants of empire made use of it, kings courted it, emperors acknowledged it, and the world was fain to call itself Christian. And these its outward triumphs were only tokens of its inward power: it was taking effect on family habits, social institutions; it was telling on the position of women, the state of slaves; it affected commerce; it altered language; it created a literature; it was seen in men's talk, dress, gestures, amusements. O brethren, what triumphs of the Gospel are written for our encouragement: triumphs, first in the old Roman world, the decay of which it arrested, and the best part of which it preserved, as an inheritance for posterity. What a work had it next to do in leavening the barbarous northern nations who destroyed that Roman empire, and raising those wild, ignorant tribes into the great nations of modern Europe. What a work has it done, and what a work has it yet to do, in Africa, in India, in China. Should we not plead with our Lord the promise implied in this parable, and beseech Him that *the whole* may be leavened. What a work

has it to do, not only in heathen countries, but here at home, in England. Where can we look and not see masses ready to be leavened, either with good principles or with bad ; large populations gathered together, education making them daily more susceptible of influence, men daily more able to communicate with each other, and act together ? Is not Satan endeavouring to preoccupy the ground ; is he not endeavouring to leaven men with infidelity, immorality, discontent, sedition ? And is this what was *intended* should pervade them ? why should not the Gospel work the wonders here that it has wrought elsewhere ? Let each of us up and be doing ; let us each endeavour to leaven our own sphere ; let us remember it is by personal influence effects are produced. We are the leaven ; we are leaven to those we come in contact with ; for good or for bad we *are* influencing them. Indeed, brethren, the state of England seems yet undecided ; many are contending who most should affect her : men seize on the press, for they know that is an engine of great power ; they endeavour to send representatives of their own kind to parliament ; they open schools. Dis-

senters, Roman Catholics, all do their best to affect men ; they work none the less because their agency, like leaven, is often small at first and unseen. It is a time for action ; there is no one that cannot do something—do his duty where God has placed him. But then, in order to leaven others, we must ourselves be leavened. Let us thus make this subject practical. Christ, the true leaven, must be received into our hearts—not only received once at our baptism, but He must continue to act there, *till the whole be leavened*; must daily renew us, till every department of our life be pervaded. There is nothing to which His rules should not be applied, nothing but what we may do, in His strength, to His glory. Every profession we may leaven. A man has no reason to say, I serve God in church, but not in the world ; on Sundays, but not on week-days ; when on leave, but not on duty ; at home, but not abroad ; with my family, but not with my companions : the whole must be leavened. He who gave Himself for us requires us to give ourselves to Him. Brethren, is your life thus pervaded with His Spirit? can you ask His blessing on all you do? do you make a

conscience of everything? do you act so in every employment of yours, as none but a Christian would act? At least, do you see that this ought to be? do you desire it should be? Beseech Him to sanctify your whole body, soul, and spirit; beseech Him that you may know His power, that the kingdom of God may come to you not in word only, but in power. How often do we meet such expressions as these in holy Scripture:—"Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." "The word of God is quick and powerful." "Christ, the power of God." "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation." "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It is to be feared many men do not look on the Gospel as thus powerful; they consider it (God forgive us for so preaching it) as tame, spiritless, ineffectual; but truly there is nothing equal to its moral power. Keep from it, if you

do not wish to be affected: when it seizes a man, like Saul the king, he must prophesy; like Saul the persecutor, he must fall down as one dead; like Felix, he must tremble; like Peter, he must go out and weep bitterly; like Elymas the sorcerer, he is blinded; like Ananias and Sapphira, he is exposed; like Simon Magus, he is abashed. There is this power in it even now; what will there be at that day when God shall make manifest the counsels of hearts! even now it often takes possession of the least likely, and when it has taken hold of a man, it makes him altogether different from what he was; it asserts its right over every province of his thought, every department of his activity; over his waking thoughts and last reflections, over his going out and coming in, over his money, over his time, over his friendships, over his most private and personal concerns. But, brethren, shrink not back; it is no other but Christ, Who loved you, Who claims this power over you,—a power which some one must exercise, which you would not have Satan exercise, which you are not fit to exercise yourselves, and which He,

your tender Master, will exercise only for your good. Cause not the Holy One of Israel to cease from among you. They are blessed who receive Him, holy, jealous, and, as the world thinks, exacting, though He be.

Alas ! how many men dread this power, and take measures lest it should be exercised over them : they do not wish to be affected ; they think of something else, lest religious thoughts should get too much hold of them ; they keep away from good books, religious men, from church, from funerals, from sacraments, from serious thoughts ; they protect themselves, and take care that religion shall only touch the surface of their thoughts ; *that* they like to have gently affected, but they are careful not to be too deeply stirred ; they would call *this* undue excitement, fanaticism, enthusiasm. Sometimes they try thus to protect their children and families from being, as they think, too religious. Oh, this is unlike the teaching of the parable. Is not the whole to be leavened ? I trust it is not so with you, brethren. Will you not bring yourselves to be leavened ? For there is a power in the

word of Christ, when it is received into the thoughts and becomes a living principle ; there is a power in the countenance of Christ, as men gaze on it, to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of us. Surely, if a man believes that all this Almighty power is only swayed by benevolence, he will bring himself within the reach of it. It is a healing power, an enlightening power, a restoring, strengthening, glorifying, beatifying power. It is all this, if only it be first a leavening power.

Yet, great as this power is, men *can* resist it, for it is moral, not mechanical : torpor, insensibility, indifference, may counteract it. But beware, ye who are not leavened by Christ will be leavened by the Evil One : he, or Christ, will have power over you. Only Satan's power is your weakness,—it is the breaking down of all manhood, will, freedom ; while Christ's power over you is your own power over yourselves, that power which so many surely feel that they want ; power against appetite, power against pride, against self-will

and selfishness, against ill-humour, against indolence, against wandering thoughts. This is the power He would fain give you, if you draw not back ; then shall His word have free course in you, and thoroughly leaven you, and you shall leaven others, and your regeneration shall be carried out into complete renewal.

SERMON XXIII.

ADVENT.—THE CHRISTIAN'S DEPOSIT.

2 TIM. i. 12.

"I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

THESE are touching words of the great apostle, addressed to one whom he loved as a son, whose tears of affection he remembered in the miserable dungeon at Rome, where he was awaiting his execution by the bloody Emperor Nero. It was now about the close of St. Paul's *second* imprisonment, which was much severer than his *first*: *then* he had dwelt in his own hired lodging, but now the monstrous emperor had determined to turn the public indignation from himself on the inoffensive Christians, and St. Paul was seized, and in full prospect of speedy martyrdom. He was all but alone, and, aged as he now was, his thoughts went back (as the thoughts of

old men are wont to do) to the scenes of his past life. He remembered with satisfaction the zeal of his parents for the Jewish faith ; he made mention of the kindnesses shewn him by friends ; he expressed his desire for one more meeting with this favourite convert, Timothy, that he might encourage him not to be daunted by the persecution that was bursting on the Christian name, and that he might more solemnly commit to him the precious deposit of faith which the Lord had entrusted to his apostle, that *he* might convey it to such as Timothy, to be by him again handed on to others, and so transmitted by faithful men to all successive generations.

In this Epistle, the apostle is naturally led to speak more of himself, his own trials, supports, and prospects, than he does in any other of his letters ; and, among his precious sayings, there is none more impressive than the text. He is speaking of his sufferings—how they had been brought upon him by his resolution in maintaining the right of the Gentile converts to the full privileges of the Church of Christ. Had he been contented to preach the Gospel as favouring especially the *Jews*, had he com-

promised its *freedom*, and been at all false to the peculiar revelations which it had pleased God to make to him as the apostle of the Gentiles, he would never have provoked the opposition which had brought upon him such acute sufferings. He did not deny the extent of these sufferings; nevertheless, saith he, I am not ashamed; I am not like a *disappointed* person, as if I had been a dupe, or had deluded myself; though it be trying to be exposed to such a storm as beats on me, though miracles are wrought for others, and none for me, though I can deliver others, but am hindered from extricating myself, and have to sit down and submit patiently, and wait till the lion choose to devour me. I am not ashamed, though I am sometimes sorely tempted to be so, for I know the character of Him to Whom I have trusted myself, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve that which I deposit with Him, and to return it to me at *that* day. The apostle, you observe, speaks like a man who has a very precious deposit which, for some reason, he chooses to place in the hands of another; it may be a diamond of enormous value, or a bond, or his child, or his

wife, or his own honour, or some literary work which is everything to him. If we had thus placed our dearest treasure absolutely in the hands of another, we can well understand that we might sometimes be visited by misgivings, and say, "Am I sure he will be faithful, can I depend on his not changing? or, though he *mean* me well, can I count on his discretion? is there no danger that he will be cajoled out of the trust?" If, in particular, we had many violent enemies, we should say, "Is my friend, my trustee, able to guard my deposit against them? What will happen to me, if he die, or if I be not able to communicate with him?" So difficult, indeed, is it to find a fellow-man equal to discharging such a trust, that we commonly resolve *not* to part with power over our treasures, but rather to guard them ourselves; and thus doing, we should perhaps judge wisely, if the choice only lay between ourselves and our fellow-men; but, brethren, praised be God, He Himself vouchsafes to do this for us, viz. to take charge of the most precious deposit we can entrust to Him.

It was of none but the Lord God that St. Paul spoke when he said, "I know Whom I

have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." So speaks St. Peter also : " Wherefore let them that suffer, according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

And what is this committing ourselves to God? Let us look at the thing closely, and not be content with words and phrases, but understand what these two apostles meant, and let us do accordingly. If St. Paul made such a deposit, may not we? Our fellow-man, I repeat, is not fit to be wholly trusted with the keeping of our souls ; we dare not altogether trust another with the keeping of our conscience ; for, though we may use helps and resort to friends for counsel, and especially to God's ministers, for guidance and relief and absolution, still, we have each a burthen which none can bear but ourselves, a responsibility which we cannot get rid of ; we cannot say to any brother-man, "Thou art answerable for me;" the soul is, after all, too individual a care to be thus disposed of: what we have been made, we must endure to be ; our eter-

nal life and happiness is our own concern ; it is committed to us by God ; He will not allow us to shrink from the charge, or shake it off. But, at the same time, He knows human weakness ; He knows that we want more assistance than man can furnish us : if He forbid us to devolve too much on man, it is because He Himself invites our confidence ; He offers to receive a trust, a sacred deposit from us. And this is great condescension, for we are His by every right, and yet He solicits us; as though we were free to dispose of ourselves. The truth is, that having given us free will, having created us with the power of choice, He treats us not as machines, but as those who must be appealed to by love :—“ My son, give Me thine heart ;” ye heavy laden, come to Me ; ye anxious, who know not how to dispose of yourselves, and are driven from one to the other, behold, My bosom is open for you to rest yourselves upon, My arms are wide enough to embrace you. What is it ye are anxious for ? trust it to *Me*. Behold the end of and cure for anxiety : no need to be disquieted about the means of our subsistence, or ask how we shall be able to bear pain, or

what is to become of us by and by, or how we can ever bear to be solitary ; unload thyself of thy burthen, stoop down and rest it ; there is One equal to it, Who invites thee to roll thy burthen off thyself, on to Him.

He is not only God, for if He were, He might seem too removed from thee in the clouds and darkness of the height above, too infinite and holy to be approached by one who is a worm and a sinner ; but, in order to win thy confidence, behold thy God has become Man ; He invites thee to trust to a human sympathy, He tells thee that there is not a sorrow thou hast known, which He has not first made trial of ; thou mayest unburthen thy laden heart into His willing ear, and deposit all thy secrets there.

Not but that we do, in a measure, commit ourselves to men : we trust our limbs to a surgeon, our health to a physician, our case to a lawyer, our fortune to an agent ; marriage, and partnerships of all sorts, and associations in professions, are full of mutual confidence : in such cases, men take a great leap, and from the confidence they feel in another, *commit* themselves, and put much out of their own

power into the hands of another. But the peculiarity in the case of the Lord our God is, that we may trust Him with all, unreservedly, without any of the precautions and securities which we take in other cases. Who, e.g., would be so unwise as to deposit money with an acquaintance without some security or written acknowledgment, for we must provide ourselves against all chances and changes? But the Lord offers Himself to us for our unreserved confidence; He, the Faithful, the Unchangeable, the Almighty. The power and the will of man has to be questioned, but of Him we may say, "I know Him Whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that He is able."

The greater their deposit, the more nervously anxious do men become, when told that there is a risk of *that* failing in which they have trusted: the poor man, indeed, who has placed no money out, is careless of the bank breaking; but the rich depositor is greatly alarmed at any rumour of its failure. But who shall describe his security whose treasure is in heaven; not whose money only, but whose heart, whose friends, whose prospects are centred there,—where no change enters,

where no enemy hath power to hurt, but all is permanent as the unchangeable will of the ever-perfect God?

Every venture of faith adds, so to say, to this deposit. The apostle Paul spoke of his having trusted much to God, because he knew he had, on the strength of God's promises, acted so as to be, of all men, most miserable, if it were possible for him to be disappointed. He had cut himself off from friends, from advancement, home and ease; had encountered stripes, shipwreck, hunger, prisons and death; and so had been like a man putting away what is his own, and foregoing the use of it for a time, to have it entered to his account as a deposit; and now, at the end of a long life, he said that he did not regret it, that he was convinced that he had acted wisely, for he could trust Him to Whom he had committed himself.

And if he had committed himself to his God before, he did so much more now, in the immediate prospect of death; even as the greatest of all examples, the Lord Jesus, expired saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Death, it may be urged, is involuntary: whatever the Son of God

might do, how, it may be asked, can a mere man make a merit of resigning his soul, voluntarily, when the time comes for him to die? Now it is plain that a martyr, like St. Paul, may very justly speak of committing his soul and departing voluntarily, because it was in his power to have avoided death, if he had so pleased. But, indeed, God allows all Christians to dispose, as it were, of themselves in death. They may draw up wills, directing the disposition not merely of their earthly goods, and of their bodies, but commanding their souls also into His hands, as into "the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour." It is voluntarily that a good Christian dies; for he brings his will to that which is his Father's will. His life is not wrung from him as what he is loth to part with, but he dies, as he sleeps, voluntarily, of his own accord, though the actual moment of the change taking place is not in his own power. It is with the same feelings that, in the Burial-service, we say of the deceased brother that "*we commit* his body to the ground in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was to this

resurrection the apostle looked forward when he spoke of that day with a secret exultation, implying, "I am content to wait; I give my body to be mangled, I yield me to the persecutor; for God accepts the trust which I put in Him, and a day is coming which shall shew that I did right to put my faith in Him." Till that day the Christian commits both soul and body, in life and in death, to his Lord's keeping: in life looking for protection, and strength, and comfort, and guidance, desiring only to know God's will in all things, and, in all things, to do it; in death, he trusts himself out into the unknown, believing that, though all things else be new, he shall find the same Lord near him who has so long watched over him; for the intermediate state he trusts that, though the body become dust, the soul shall be borne by angels to Abraham's bosom, to that paradise which the disembodied spirit of his Lord once entered, and where now the light of His countenance visits and shines continually. But still it is to the day, the great day, that he chiefly looks forward; he reckons that he is scarcely himself till then; for then shall be the union of soul and body, then shall

all things be new ; new heavens, new earth, and a renewed human nature to enjoy them, and to enter into the fulness of blessing at God's right hand. To die with well-grounded hopes like these, comes up to what the Greeks called an *Euthanasia*, — a happy death — an end so blessed that it satisfied the living that such a death was better than life, that nothing was to have been more desired for their friend than so to close this anxious and exposed life. Brethren, may we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his. How sad to die, as the wicked sometimes die, persisting in falsehood to the last ; careful for appearances before man, careless of realities before God ; hardened in crime, monuments of divine retribution ; perhaps believing that, after death, we are nothing but a lump of clay. Oh, if you have ever heard of any passing thus to the dread tribunal, where no secrets are hid, pray that you may in no way approach to such hardness and impenitence, and turn to the great apostle, visit his martyr-prison, and see how a Christian can die. It has before now gone to turn a man from vice to be called to the death-bed of

a good man, to be made see how a Christian can die. To-day I have endeavoured to introduce you to some of the last moments of one of our great benefactors, the apostle Paul, that you may see how he died. May you be led to live like him, that like him you may die. The passage from St. Peter teaches us that we must commit our souls, *in well-doing*, to our God, who will then prove Himself a faithful Creator, i.e. One who did not call us into existence in order to be miserable, One who is able to conduct to a bright inheritance the children to whom He has given birth.

The apostle *knew* whom he had trusted ; do you know what you are trusting to ? Many, I fear, are trusting to chance, to they know not what. They have the most precious treasure committed to them, viz. their happiness, their character, their usefulness for eternity ; and at present it all appears to be at the mercy of every accident : they have not a moment to depend upon ; their life, their reason is out of their own control, in the power of another Being, whom they take no pains to please, though He be their best Friend. What madness this is, when they might so securely

provide for themselves; when there is One solicitous to be trusted by them, able to keep whatever they will commit to Him, to preserve it against all enemies, and on to the furthest bounds that thought can reach. O brethren, mark with what ripe experience the apostle spoke,—“I know Whom I have believed;” he spake as the gray-haired saint testifying to the younger Christian, whom he was about to leave in unprotected feebleness,—weak in health, and not naturally, perhaps, strong in character,—and, in order to encourage him to commit his all to the Lord, the dying apostle exclaims, “I know Whom I have trusted; I have had proofs of His faithfulness, I have largely experienced His power and mercy; I do not repent that I trusted Him,—trust *thou* Him too.” And, brethren, should not that which encouraged Timothy encourage us also? Believe Him, and you shall afterwards be able to exclaim that you *know* Whom you have believed; seek Him, for He never faileth them that seek Him. Trust Him, for none who did so were ever disappointed. Commit to Him thy going out and thy coming in, thy life, thy death, thy hopes, thy fears, thy body, thy soul; and

He will jealously guard whatever thou positest with Him; He will preserve it impaired, He will restore it increased the day of the restitution of all things—*that day.*

SERMON XXIV.

ADVENT.—THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

JOHN viii. 10, 11.

“ When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more.”

THIS passage belongs to a portion of Scripture not often treated of from the pulpit, but of which we do not well to be shy, for it is full of lessons of vast importance. The delicacy of the subject, or fear lest it should be used to encourage persons to think lightly of sin, perhaps, led to its being omitted in the course of lessons appointed to be read aloud in some of the churches of old ; and so it came to pass that in many manuscripts, written for use in Church, it is wanting. The Church, however, has now for ages recognised it as part of her Lord’s teaching, and recommended

it to our pious study, and I think we shall find such marks of superhuman wisdom, love, and power about it as to leave no doubt on the mind who He is whose words and actions are here recorded for us. It was early in the morning that "He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master," (calling Him Rabbi, and, for the time, professing to treat Him with the utmost respect,) —"Master, this woman," (of her alone they spoke; the man, the partner of her guilt, the greater sinner, perhaps, of the two, they did not produce: either, from superior strength, he had escaped, or they, like the world in general, were disproportionately severe on the weaker of the two,)—"this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned;" and certainly it is written in Leviticus xx. 10, "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's

wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death ;” and again in Deuteronomy xxii. 22, “If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman : so shalt thou put away evil from Israel ;” and though the law does not define by what punishment they shall die, it may have been usual, when the law was enforced, to execute by stoning.—So, urged these hypocrites, so Moses commanded us, but what sayest Thou ? They set one against the other : Moses, our acknowledged lawgiver, decided one way, but, Thou, forsooth, art the author of a new law ; it remains to be ascertained what Thou sayest. “This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.” Perhaps, as on some other occasions, in their short-sighted cunning they fancied that, whichever way He answered, they should be able to use His words to His destruction : if He decided against the law, then should He be accused to the people of innovation, and they would urge that certainly *He* could not come from God who taught contrary to God’s own law ; on the

other hand, if He condemned the adulteress to die, then might they report Him to the Romans as exercising the power of life and death, and interfering with the established government of Pilate and Cæsar. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. It was as when one came to Him requesting Him to interfere for him with his brother about a question of property,—“ Speak to him, that he divide the inheritance with me ;” and He replied, “ Man, who made Me a Judge or a Divider over you ? ” For He had come into this world on a particular mission, and He kept Himself to His selected work : He came to be a Prophet and Teacher, a very Martyr for truth ; He came to be a Priest, and to offer Himself as a priceless Sacrifice. He was indeed King, but His kingdom was not of this world ; He was engaged in establishing a kingdom with quite peculiar institutions, which should have none but willing subjects, the severest penalty of which should be excommunication ; from its earthly punishments, therefore, any one might withdraw himself by declaring himself no longer a member. It was

to be a society the members of which should undergo no punishments but what they themselves asked for and submitted to; and this society itself was at present only in embryo,—the time had not come for proclaiming its rules and offering, widely, admission into it; and when that time should come, the members would be none the less subjects of earthly kingdoms for belonging to this new society: power over life and death would not belong to its agents; they, like their Master, would have to refuse to divide inheritances or to consign culprits to death. Also He would set the example of a strict observance of the laws of justice, which require, before a person is executed, not only that he have done wrong, but that he be sentenced by a competent tribunal. This woman had done wrong, of that there was no doubt, but those who demanded her execution must proceed according to set rules,—must procure a legal trial before the appointed judge, and not take the law into their own hands, and in a popular tumult act on the impulse of a rabble, and themselves execute a criminal, however plain it might be that she ought to die. Our Lord there-

fore refused to attend to the charge, as not being in a position to deal with it, and drew or wrote figures on the sand of the temple-court with His finger; for it is common in the East for men to write on the sand of floors in this way; and this He did in order to shew that He would not attend to the statements made to Him. But they continued asking Him, for the more that they saw that He was unwilling to reply, the more secure were they of a triumph over Him; and at last, since they would have it so, He lifted up Himself and said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her;" that is, though *she* deserve to die, see to it whether ye be they who should be forward in bringing her to punishment; some one must cast the *first* stone, do it *he* who can lay his hand on his heart and say that he is himself guiltless. We need not understand that our Lord, by this, charged on all of them the particular sin of adultery, though it was a very corrupt age, and He called it an adulterous generation; but sins of uncleanness He did refer to, and bade them consider with themselves

whether they were the persons who ought to go out of the way, by irregular proceedings, to hurry a sinner to death. If it fell to the lot of such as they to get a sinner punished, it would have better become them to go about it with evident humiliation and reluctance, as a grave and painful duty. Having shot forth this arrow, as it were, aimed at their consciences, the All-wise Lord returned to His employment, and seemed again engaged in writing on the ground. Again He stooped down, that He might relieve them from the observation of His scrutiny, lest they should, from false pride, resist confession, and harden themselves against those strivings of conscience which His heart-searching words and piercing look had set at work. And what a wonder followed! Marvellous it was that men so case-hardened, so hypocritical, and self-deceiving as these, should be pricked to the heart by convictions of sin, but so it was: "They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." The springs were set in motion of that wonderful power within us, which is sufficient by itself to constitute the

torment of eternity. For conscience whispered, If I put my hand to the assertion that she deserves stoning, what do I not myself deserve? am I not admitting my own condemnation? have I not admitted it? I have something else to think of besides inflicting vengeance on her. How shall I escape it myself? Who is this that is searching me? He looked as if He knew what I had done. In whose presence is it that I find myself? Verily it is insupportable. I wish I had never meddled in this matter. When their mysterious antagonist had thrown out that word, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," the younger had looked to the elder and more venerable, as though it especially belonged to them to answer to the challenge; they expected some senior to come forward and shew his readiness to carry the matter out to extremity, but now, strange to say, the eldest of all was first in slinking away: one by one, each felt that he could not incur the responsibility; whilst each was arrested by the terrors quickened in his own breast, he scarcely observed his companions deserting him, but by and by he

too looked up, and found others gone, and himself left to occupy a prominent post as the senior of those remaining; so, glad to make his escape before that eye, now bent on the ground, should again glance upwards, he too slid away. They had forgotten the woman's case in their own. They had no leisure to attend to her, for now they felt that they had sins enough to answer for of their own. The eye of the soul was turned inwards and riveted upon self. Each slunk away bearing his own burthen. One remembered the adultery he had to give account for; another the seduction which anew haunted him, and rose up before him fresh as when he ruined his victim; others remembered years of guilty lewdness. Matters, which at other times they managed to forget, now took a fearful hold upon them, and the sin appeared not, as passion had represented it, as a blameless necessity, but as a deed hateful to God and man, which belonged to each man's own single self, and separated him from God. Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. She had not fled from Him as the others had, though

when her accusers were scattered, she too, it would seem, might have departed; but, sinner as she had been, there was not in her that pride, self-righteousness, and malice which blinded them; and may be, in the fear of death and the confusion of shame, casting about for some undeserved comfort, some one succour amid the angry world arrayed against her, His composure, loftiness, and godlikeness commanded her respect, and contrasted favourably with the thinly disguised vices of her assailants. Then, too, whatever He meant, His words had had the effect of extricating her from her pursuers, and on *her* He had not looked with angry severity, as He had on them. His reserve and evident unwillingness to deal with the case, left her some hope, and "when Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord." Sin had tied *their* hands,—there was no sin in Him to tie His, yet He said unto her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." On *this* occasion, His first advent, He came not to

condemn the world, not to execute the office of judge,— He came to save; He would not condemn her, He would save her. The day would come when she must stand before Him, see Him in other sort, see Him coming in the clouds of heaven, and all the holy angels with Him: but even she need not be sentenced on that day; time should be given her: His visit to the earth was a signal of favour, a time of relaxation, a jubilee, a time for releasing of captives, for remitting of debts, for forgiveness of sins. He had cast out devils, He had healed lepers, and there was mercy even for her. But as yet He did not say to her, Go in peace, but only, Go and sin no more; lest His words “neither do I condemn thee” should be misunderstood, He adds this: “sin no more.” In one sense He did condemn, i. e. he denounced her act as sin, but in the sense of sentencing He did not condemn, for He was not now sitting as Judge: even as with us it is not enough that a man be one of the judges of the land to enable him to condemn a person; condemnation can be pronounced only in an appointed place, at a set

time, after production of witnesses, after opportunity given for the culprit to be heard in his own defence. Because He was not at present acting as Judge, therefore for the time He abstains from sentencing her ; whom, as her Maker, He had utterly in His power ; whom, as the Judge of all the earth, He will one day cause to stand at His bar.

Behold, brethren, how the great Teacher escaped the snares which those miserable men, in their petty craft, laid for Him. He had neither controverted the law of Moses, nor provoked a collision with the civil government ; yet He had discomfited them ; He had preserved the character of His mission of mercy by extricating her, without palliating her sin. Indeed, it had not been true mercy to have palliated her sin. It is never mercy to call sin by a lighter name than it deserves ; but He has shewn us by this incident how He would have us regard sin ; not as the occasion of triumphing over a fellow-creature, and contrasting our fancied virtue with their damaged character ; He would not have us point the finger of scorn, or clamour for irregular punishment, but while we call things

by their right names, learn this chiefly from instances of sin, viz. that we ourselves are not without blame. When tempted to hold up another to censure or to clamour for their condemnation, let us think we hear Him say, Art thou, then, without sin thyself? if so, cast the first stone; if not, thou hast other work to do than to hound on the dogs of vengeance; thou hast to descend into thine own breast, and deal with the sins thou wilt find there, and prepare to meet thy God.

And, brethren, remember this word of the Saviour applies not only to sins of this particular kind,—sins of impurity; but whatever the cause be for which public censure is provoked, let us still consider whether it becomes us to cast stones. “Thou that sayest a man should not steal, dost thou commit sacrilege?” Alas! how many are very severe on a man for dishonesty, who have yet themselves taken an unfair advantage, or evaded government taxes! How many are vociferous against a man for a falsehood, who yet themselves have given a wrong view of facts, or, for the sake of their party, or a friend, have strained their conscience to say what they would not have

thought allowable under common circumstances. When others break down, when exposures take place, and characters that have stood high are found wanting, it becomes us all to dive into our own hearts and explore our own shortcomings. These awakenings of conscience that the Saviour produced, so suddenly and wonderfully, in these hardened men, forcing them to avow sins which less than any other they contemplated pleading guilty to,—such awakenings may be sought by us; yes, we shall do well to seek them: anything is better than a stupified conscience; better shame, better exposure, better humiliation, distress of mind, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, than the easy, self-satisfied, self-deceiving cry of Peace, when there is no peace. And, brethren, this above all things is to be noticed—that such an awakening of conscience is in store for all; men may anticipate it, and voluntarily, for the sake of discovering and correcting sin, pray to know and feel it; but even if they manage to go through the whole of life without conscience becoming sensitive, yet death will remove the veil; or even if death do not wholly expose to a man what

he is, the day of judgment shall reveal it. The presence of Him who then wrote on the ground, but who shall hereafter sit on the great white throne,—His presence shall try all hearts, and bring all sins to mind. Excuses, shall be gone then, there shall be an utter inability to offer palliations ; sin will be seen in its naked hideousness, inseparable from the soul which in this life shall not have repented of it, and the cause of eternal separation from that God who shall then be a Judge, and to the wicked only a Judge,—to them no Saviour, no longer a Saviour. O dreadful day of the wrath of the Lamb, of Him who once said, “Neither do I condemn thee.”

O brethren, that scene had much to do with us ; we have a great deal to do with it : it was a rehearsing, on a small scale, of the effects of conscience upon the day of judgment ; of the exposures, the tortures of the wicked, when sins long past shall take hold of them, brought out by the voice of God, by the penetrating glance of the Son of Man. On that day it will be too late for sin to be separated from the sinner’s soul, but as yet,

dear brethren, that scene in the Jewish temple witnesses that the Saviour is ready to help the most degraded to emancipation from sin and its torments.

Conviction of sin made many flee from Him, made one abide near Him. Will you be of the many or like the one? They made their escape because they would not submit to His treatment; they plunged into the world, probably they managed to forget, lost in business or drowned in pleasure, and after a time they could scarcely believe they had ever been moved to feel sin so deeply; they made their escape for a time—escaped Him, escaped themselves; but death they could not escape, judgment they will not be able to escape: while she, the one who shunned not her punishment, but bore the shame, watching His eye, waiting His word, trusting in His mercy, she heard, “Go, and sin no more;” not a mere injunction, but a command that involved a promise; for He that bade “sin no more” was ready also to give power to sin no more. He commands nothing which He is not willing to render possible. O brethren, put Him not to His strange work of

condemnation, that which is so uncongenial to His creating, redeeming love; but in order that He may never have to condemn, but only to forgive, to heal, to save, explore your sins, meet them, ask help against them, renounce, conquer them, go, and sin no more, and conscience shall be, not your torment, but your sweet reward; and He shall be, not your condemning Judge; but your forgiving Saviour.

SERMON XXV.

ADVENT.—SOWING AND REAPING.

GAL vi. 8.

“ He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

THIS seems to have been intended by the apostle primarily to respect the bestowment of our money ; he is speaking of the catechumen imparting to his instructor, of doing “ good to all, specially to them who are of the household of faith,” as in a parallel passage,—“ This I say, he that soweth little shall reap little ;” but doubtless he was delivering a general principle, of wide application : God, he says, is not to be mocked : when men are brought up, hereafter, for judgment, there will be no possible room for any evasion or shifting of places, so that any should appropriate that which he has not deserved ; the lot of each will be infallibly and

unalterably assigned, and it will be proportioned to his conduct here. Our actions will be reproduced in their results, as seed is in its fruit ; a long time may indeed have passed, during which they were hidden from observation, but at length they will reappear, our future selves growing out of the root of our present selves, being nothing but the unfolding of what we are now, only on an enormous scale, magnified beyond human expectation, in as wonderful a degree as the hundredfold increase of the grain of corn. Sowing takes but a short time ; very soon is the seed committed to the ground, and there the husbandman leaves it ; days, and weeks, and months roll over it, the world forgets it ; but it is not lost, it reappears, the same, only so increased. And this is an image of our lot : *our* sowing takes a short time ; after a short life our actions are committed to the keeping of time, and there is no recalling them ; they are sealed up to be opened on “that day,” and then they shall come out again, only vastly and awfully magnified, for good or for evil.

A cup of cold water here is repaid with such enormous interest there ; what men call

a foible or frailty *here*, appears *there* as an ever-clinging taint. Of natural seeds, many are lost, and never reappear; but of actions, not one perishes,—each has an indestructible vitality. Not one action that we ever did is forgotten, not one but has already told, in many ways, on our own and others' being; not one has yet had its final issue, but each waits its full completion there.

This being, then, the law both of our nature and of God's government, the apostle forewarns us, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Let us see some of the ways in which a man may sow to the flesh. 1. He may be for ever seeking his own credit in all he does; giving alms, not so much to relieve the distressed, as to get credit for being charitable; coming forward in works of mercy, and being zealous on public occasions, in order to gain the approbation of some one person. I do not mean a vulgar bidding for general applause, but a more secret ambition for the good opinion of some one in particular, to whom we wish to appear zealous. Good men

will own that such considerations do, or at least once did, blemish their actions ; yet, as far as they have weight, the man is sowing to the flesh. Many are the little arts resorted to in order to obtain this credit ; sometimes the praise, sometimes the dispraise of others ; sometimes the display of our good qualities, sometimes a half-withdrawal of them ; the passion grows on men, till the appetite for praise becomes ravenous and undistinguishing in its coarse greediness. Often the man is blinded, and does not see that he is being mocked, as men gratify his taste and yet laugh at him ; his actions become less and less real, more entirely done only for the sake of the applause they are to excite ; he gets to be always acting for effect, thinking of what others will say of him, unnatural and constrained ; he is indeed sowing to the flesh, providing only for that which is transitory.

2. So, too, is the man who makes his own comfort the end of his life ; who, perhaps, with no very evident necessity for exertion, no strong call on him, is enabled by his circumstances to sit down and choose an object in life, and being without any violent temptations

or peculiar force of passions, ends by making his own convenience, pleasure, and comfort his chief concern. He is sowing to the flesh : he may do no harm, may be very respectable and pleasant ; but it is a bad sign if his thoughts circle round himself, for he is likely every day to make his own convenience more and more paramount, to be more put out if things go wrong with him, more callous and indifferent to others, more timid and fearful lest his nest should be robbed, more sensitive of slights and more fretted by annoyances. He is likely every day to become more soft and enfeebled by an effeminate life, more solitary and wrapped up in himself, as he year by year becomes less capable of loving and less worthy of love. He is sowing to the flesh, providing fleeting gratifications, catering for his mortal part, furnishing extravagantly his temporary lodging.

3. In the same way he is sowing to the flesh whose aim and object in life is to have his own will, to submit to no one, but make all submit to him. This man, perhaps, disregards comfort, nay, he may not care for credit ; his one fixed object is to carry his own will, and be under no man.

4. So, too, with a very opposite character—the man who has scarcely a will at all, but is the slave of passion and appetite, hurried along in a mad career without time to think, risking all recklessly, and denying himself nothing; with no master principle, no prudent calculation of credit, no steady pursuit of his own will, no judicious forethought of comfort,—he is surely sowing to the flesh.

All these shall of the flesh reap corruption; they shall be startled and confounded when presented, at “that day,” with the fearful harvest they have raised for themselves; so different it will seem to what they had expected, and yet only the natural outgrowth of the seeds they themselves planted. 1. He that lived to secure his own credit, will wake up with the passion still running like liquid fire in his veins, the insatiable vanity shall still consume him, but he shall find himself in a world where there will be none to flatter him; he will be stripped and exposed, bare and pointed at. Shame and everlasting spitting shall be the portion of him to whom fame was the breath of his nostrils. In a world of realities he will be a hollow, unreal being; where all is true, he will have

nothing genuine ; his surface of varnished virtues torn off, he will stand shrinking in his abject meanness. Where will be then his petty arts and artifices, his glib excuses, his plausible coverings ? He shall have reaped corruption by no extraordinary interposition, but by the natural and most regular constitution of nature. He hath created and fostered in himself a diseased and monstrous passion, which shall be its own avenger, and find no food. He loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and he will find that he has forfeited that which he despised ;—so will *he* reap corruption.

2. See, too, how they will reap who shall have lived only for their own selfish comfort ; they will have become in this life exorbitant and enfeebled, ever labouring to provide themselves luxuries which they are not able to enjoy, daily more and more isolated ; now their future state will be but the enhancing of this self-engendered misery. They will be only more weak and helpless, more exposed at a thousand points, in a world which they will have made hostile to them, for they will have no taste for its enjoyments, and the sight of

them will only inflame, embitter, and irritate ; there will be nothing there that can be gathered round self ; a sense of the loneliness of the being who has fallen off from God, and has nothing to uphold him in the infinity of creation, will crush the isolated soul ; it will have no shelter to betake itself to, none wherein to cover itself ; provisions for comfort, devices for excluding thought, contrivances for escaping oneself, soporifics to conscience,—where will they be then ? He that hath sown to the flesh will reap corruption.

3. So, too, with him who hardened his own will ; it will then, alas ! be only too inflexible, inflexible to good ; the time when it might have owned a higher law will have passed and gone ; it will be fixed in irreconcilable hostility to the one triumphant, universal will of God ; it will feel itself utterly defeated, left without power or hope, to dash itself against its cage in hopeless and miserable despair ; and this only the carrying out of its earthly state. —The sowing to the flesh will have borne corruption.

4. And so, once more, will it be with him who owned no law, but was the sport

and slave of his own fickle appetites : the craving will be there, only more insatiable ; his passions will be still his masters, his tyrants ; and he will be bidden drudge, and fill up the infinite void ; for as, when on earth, he was hurried along, not so much to obtain pleasure (which he before long learned was not to be so obtained), as because he was unable otherwise to get rid of the irritation of appetite, so will he be tortured still by importunate passions which there will be no means of gratifying ;—and so will he who sowed to the flesh reap corruption.

But let us turn to the other side, and see what it is to sow and to reap to the Spirit.

Now good actions are much like seed ; they often seem at the time wasted, just as seed appears to be so much taken out of the stock for our support, and to be sacrificed. Many a good and holy action is, to a worldly looker on, thrown away : alms are bestowed, and it is found out afterwards that the object was unworthy ; prayers are offered for something which is denied ; time is spent on preparation for what never occurs, and all seems so much subtracted from the stock and fund of enjoy-

ment, and for the time sacrificed. But the text tells us not one is lost, no seed is found at last to be better bestowed than that which in faith the husbandman sows. What men spend on themselves, they lose; what they part with, alone remains to them. For another reason, too, good deeds are like seed; they seem small, and trifling, and insignificant. The saints are astonished that anything so little and worthless as their poor performances should be remembered and rewarded on high. They are conscious of so many blemishes and imperfections in them; so much that is external, a mere coating, so little heart and kernel. Good actions, too, are secret, like seeds: many a holy deed will not reappear till the last day, when the secrets of hearts shall be made manifest, and every man shall have praise of God.

Let us take three instances of sowing to the Spirit.

1. If a man is striving after humility, by turning away his attention from all things flattering to his pride and self-consequence, never allowing himself to dwell on his own successes, good points, or popularity, but

taking occasion to humble and despise himself every time he is praised ; thinking of some fault when he is applauded for some virtue ; giving the credit of his successes to his friends or parents, or teachers or helpers, and reproving himself for not having made greater progress with all his advantages ; if at the sight of sin in others, he acknowledges the seeds of the same evil in himself, if he never hears another blamed without feeling how much he himself deserves the same censure, if he never hears of another being punished without wondering at the Lord's forbearance to himself ;—the man who thus labours after humility is sowing to the Spirit.

2. If another is cultivating a loving spirit, endeavouring to see something to love in all whom he comes across, not content with regarding them as pleasant companions, useful friends, serviceable domestics, but endeavouring to love them ; endeavouring for Christ's sake, the sake of their common Master, in the faith of their redemption, to discern in them something loveable ; not allowing the presence of some faults to make him think it impossible that there should yet be something Christian

and lovely underneath, but watching for the appearance of this, reproving himself for his prejudice and blindness till he find it, and of course, in order to love, putting the most favourable construction on all that is doubtful ; slow to believe evil, and diligent in imagining good ; and not content with thinking, endeavouring to call out a loving spirit by actions tending to produce it ; accepting kindnesses, receiving obligations, and making himself continual sacrifices ; thinking every day how he can give pleasure to those with whom he lives, how he can promote their happiness, and fall in with their humour ; with a heart open to see the love which binds together the world, and finding it everywhere without, because he finds it within ;—this man is sowing to the Spirit.

3. So, again, is he who is living a pains-taking, hard-working life ; who declines no call of duty, escapes not into life's easy places, but stands ready to do the work that is given to the sons of men to be done ; if he does not put off doing his duty because it is disagreeable, but, animated with love to his Master, takes pleasure in labouring for Him ; he is sowing to the Spirit.

And how shall such reap ? 1. The humble shall find the blessedness of the poor in spirit, and theirs is the kingdom of God. He shall find himself admitted to the most secret stores of the kingdom, encompassed with its most copious wealth. In proportion to his humility will it be safe for him to be thus invested. It we may judge of the principle that will guide the assignment of the high places in that kingdom, it would seem that humility must be the rule according to which they will be distributed. Even in this life, pride or self-elation make power and glory unsuitable ; even we, with our little wisdom, would not willingly advance those for whom greatness would be too much ; rather would we seek out a lowly, chastened, and self-humbling spirit as the only one who could safely be entrusted with the perilous gift. And so, in a way, may it be there. Perhaps the more a spirit is exercised in dependence on God, and has measured the depths of its own weakness, the more will be entrusted to it of the spiritual talents, the lordship over cities, the seat on the right hand and on the left, which shall be given to those for whom they are prepared.

2. So, too, shall the loving reap there according as they have sown here : here they have, by God's grace, made themselves capable of loving, and there they shall at length find themselves in an atmosphere of love. On all sides of them shall be objects of love ; nothing that is unlovely will be admitted there ; it will not be there as here, where love often puts itself forth in an unkindly soil, and a heart ready to love has difficulty to find objects on which to rest ; there will be no separations and barriers between spirits that were meant to be united, no painful inconsistencies, no coldness, no misunderstandings ; above all, the man who hath been taught by the Spirit to love with Christian charity, will find himself in the presence of Him that is Love, and find himself capable of loving, and delighting, and resting in that supreme object. He may not only love, but be loved ; he will find that of God's wonderful mercy he may approach that fountain of blessedness, and receive the love of the Most High ; his desires and cravings shall at length be satisfied, and love shall at last be, at one and the same time, infinite and satisfied.

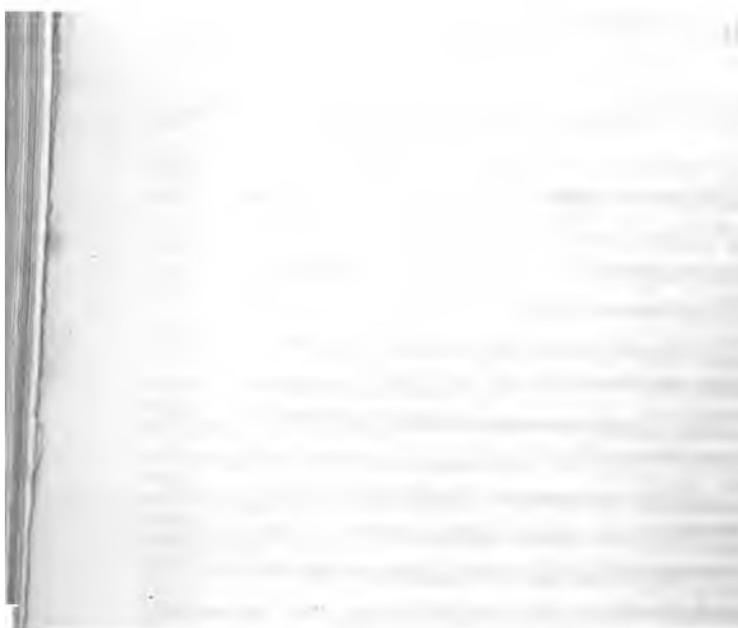
3. So, again, he who has sown to the Spirit by diligent labour in God's service, shall reap there not only in outward blessedness, (this it is not my object to speak of to-day,) but also in inward wealth ; reap not only in rewards bestowed on him, but in the inward strength and energy, order and power, which shall have ennobled his spirit. He shall find in himself vast capacities for spiritual action ; the little struggles and conflicts of this short life shall have left permanent effects on the spirit ; every vigorous exertion once made will be found not to have passed away with the moment that called it forth, but to have eternally elevated and expanded the soul, and made it capable of nobler services and more glorious ministrations in the kingdom of heaven.

Surely, brethren, something like this seems to be the truth set before us in the text ; a mysterious truth which it is above our present powers to follow out, and the particular results of which God, in His wisdom, has concealed from us ; allowing us to see enough to shew us that this retributive compensation is both a law of the divine government, and, as we might expect, a law also of our own nature ;

that, both naturally and by divine appointment, what a man soweth, that shall he also reap ; that we may not leave the result to chance ; that we may not expect things to follow anyhow, at random, but that if we would reap, we must sow ; if we would reap one fruit, we must not sow another ; that no action that falls from us here is unimportant or transitory, but has a lasting effect on our being, reappears, in its consequences, after the lapse of ages, only on a scale awfully magnified.

Let us then carry these thoughts with us into our daily life and practice ; despising and overlooking nothing, thinking nothing too small to be sown for immortality. With our money we may sow to the flesh or to the Spirit, with our time we may sow to the flesh or to the Spirit ; every moment now may be the seed of years there, every moment of wrestling prayer and struggling with our own stiff-neckedness, while we are bringing ourselves under the yoke and forcing ourselves into compliance, will bear fruit there in peaceful victory, enlarged powers, and perfected strength. Every moment now that we rescue from the world, from wandering thoughts and

castle-building, day-dreams and vanity, for retirement and recollection, self-examination and meditation, will bear fruit there in knowledge, love, and joy. Nay, brethren, not only *may* we be thus acting, but we *are* thus sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit ; with every penny of our money, in every moment of our time, with every thought we indulge, we are either doing or undoing ; either making or marring ourselves ; either widening or reducing the distance between ourselves and our perfection. Whilst we have been in this church this morning, now that we are going back to our own homes, in every other hour of this day, we shall be sowing for one or for the other ; for the corruption of the noblest work of God, an immortal soul, as it passes lower and lower in the scale of being, to greater darkness, weakness, deadness, emptiness, and misery ; or for the quickening, and elevating, and expanding, and glorifying of our nature in the image of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, unto access to the ever-blessed Father.



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